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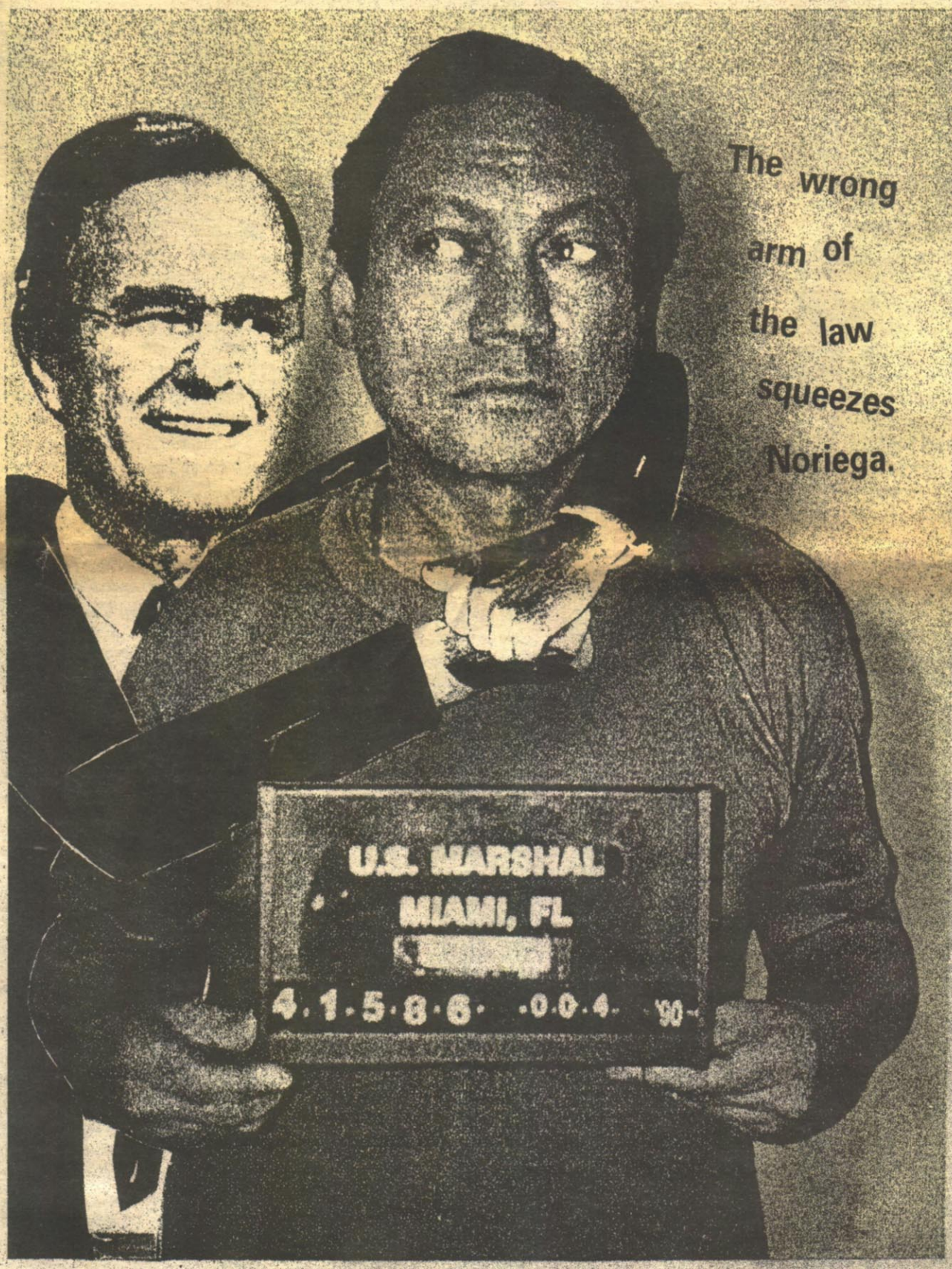
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POETIC INJUSTICE



Warren Richey reports, page 3

Tories rule Britannia: Will the bitter fruit of Labor's loss pass?

By Duncan Green

LONDON

Before this month's national elections in Britain, speculation here centered on how badly the ruling Conservative Party would be defeated. After the Tories' surprise victory on April 9, however, pundits began debating a different question: Have the Tories forged a permanent parliamentary majority like Japan's Liberal Democrats, and can the Labor Party—in opposition since 1979—ever win power again?

Geographically, Labor has become a party of the Celtic ghettos. Outside London, the South of England is a blue Tory swath stretching from coast to coast, almost uninterrupted by Labor red or Liberal Democrat gold.

Before the April 9 elections, conditions for a Labor Party victory couldn't have been better. Conservative Prime Minister John Major was saddled with a sick economy. The end of the Cold War had robbed the ruling Conservatives of one of their best campaign issues—defense. And rising crime rates had undermined the Tories' claim to be the party of law and order.

Virtually every poll taken during the campaign had shown Labor with a small but steady lead. Even the staid *Financial Times* acknowledged the inevitable, endorsing the cause of long-suffering Labor Party leader Neil Kinnock. But even behind Major, the Conservatives won the same slice of the vote—42 percent—as former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher did in 1983 and 1987.

At first glance, the deepest economic recession since World War II should have dented the Conservatives' credentials as the party of sound economic management. But exit polls suggested that a late surge in Tory support stemmed from fears that Labor would increase taxes and blunt economic recovery.

The British people voted safety first, even if it meant returning the government that engineered the recession in the first place. Investors rewarded them with a \$30 billion (\$53 billion) boom on the stock market the day after the election, and pundits on all sides are predicting a period of increased investment and an end to the recession, now that "political uncertainty" about the government has come to an end.

Labor's loss: Hastily hiding their own surprise, the Tories claimed never to have believed the opinion polls.

For Labor, an exhausted Neil Kinnock resigned, blaming the pro-Tory newspapers for the defeat. With the party scheduled to select Kinnock's successor on July 18, an intense round of soul-searching has begun.

Historically, Labor has espoused a high level of state intervention in the economy, largely through national ownership of utilities and strategic industries such as coal and steel. Its voters have been the industrial working class, its chief source of cash the trade unions. Since the mid-'70s, both its philosophy and its base of support have been electoral liabilities. The industrial working class—along with British industry—is in long-term decline and is being replaced by service-industry workers and small business employees who are much less inclined to vote Labor.

In the late '70s and early '80s, Margaret Thatcher built her support on the upwardly mobile working class who were abandoning Labor in droves. She carried out remorseless social surgery to create a home-owning, share-owning society that would no longer rely on state provision and would instead form an individualist, pro-Tory bastion. Like Stalin in reverse, she created kulaks out of collectives.

Finally, over the course of the last two decades, the rise of Rupert Murdoch and other pro-Tory entrepreneurs has turned the popular press into the Conservatives' attack dog, carrying out remorseless character assassination against the Labor leadership. In his resignation speech, Kinnock singled out the press for criticism. Although easy to dismiss as sour grapes, a glance at the tabloids' coverage during the last days of the campaign shows an extraordinary level of vitriol against a leader they routinely termed "a Welsh windbag."

In the face of these adversities, Kinnock's seemingly impossible mission was to stem his party's long-term decline and make Labor electable. A former party dissident himself, Kinnock reasserted party unity by purging dissenters, most notably the Trotskyist group, Militant Tendency. He abandoned unpopular policies such as unilateral nuclear disarmament and distanced himself from the trade unions in an attempt to align Labor with the new social realities of post-industrial Britain.

Though one of the most electorally unsuccessful leaders in Labor history, Kinnock has been an extraordinary party manager, transforming the ramshackle and divided mess he inherited in 1983. To his supporters, Neil Kinnock brought the Labor Party back in touch with the British people. To his critics, he abandoned socialist principles in favor of a caring capitalism—gauging party policy by opinion polls. The TV coverage of the campaign shows just how much the party's image has changed. In 1983, barely audible men in duffel coats harangued small crowds from rickety stages in wind-swept parks and squares. This year, it was all stage-managed for TV, with massive podiums, double-breasted suits, makeup for the cameras and policies to match. (The only thing that hasn't changed is that men still dominate Labor platforms. One analysis revealed that, out of 1,031 campaign appearances by party representatives on major TV and radio news programs, women accounted for only 33.)

Laboring on: Now Kinnock is history, and his potential successors are laying out their wares. The front-runner is John Smith, an adenoidal Scottish barrister with the reassuring presence that Kinnock sought so desperately to acquire. Smith's strength is economic competence and pragmatism—he comes across as a sympathetic but stern bank manager.

His problem is that he is Scottish. Like the Welshman Kinnock, Smith is an outsider trying to convince dubious English voters to switch to Labor. His main opponent is Bryan Gould, a smooth academic with a seat in the affluent South who appears more radical than Smith on economic issues but more distanced from the trade unions. All sides fear that an acrimonious or protracted campaign will damage the party and distract from the essential inquest into its most recent defeat.

Besides succession, the issue of Scotland's future has gripped the Labor Party in the weeks after the election. Scotland remained a bastion of Labor support, giving the party 49 of the country's 72 members of Parliament (MPs). As election after election has returned a Conservative government in Westminster—despite a massive Labor majority in Scotland—nationalist feelings have crystal-

ized into rising demands for some form of independence or regional government.

All parties now support some kind of constitutional reform in Scotland, except for the Tories. John Major refuses to countenance the idea, even though, as he pointed out during the campaign, Scottish independence would end Labor's chances of ever taking power in London.

Though Scottish sovereignty has been a prickly issue for the Tories, it could also prove to be highly divisive for Labor. In mid-April, Scottish Labor MPs helped launch Scotland United, a fledgling effort to unite all of Scotland's non-Conservative parties. The Labor leadership attempted to deflate the effort by calling for a referendum on Scotland's status, but the MPs have continued their campaign to win more autonomy for Scotland.

Labor's defeat has also revived demands for fundamental reforms to the British voting system, an issue already heavily debated during the campaign. Britain currently runs a "first-past-the-post" system. The country is divided up into 651 constituencies with roughly 60,000 voters in

INSIDE STORY

each one. The candidate in each constituency who receives the greatest number of votes becomes that area's member of Parliament. The leader of the party winning the most MPs becomes prime minister and forms the government.

The drawback with the system is that a party that finished second in every district would not send a single representative to parliament. This most seriously affects Britain's third-largest party, the Liberal Democrats. Despite winning 19 percent of the vote, the Lib Dems won only 20 seats, 3 percent of the total number. Not surprisingly, the Lib Dems are at the forefront of demands for a change in the voting system to produce numbers of MPs roughly proportional to the parties' shares of the vote. With each successive defeat, however, support for proportional representation (PR) has grown within the Labor Party. The days after April 9 saw a flood of articles and interviews from Labor notables discussing the merits of PR. But how do you persuade the government to change the system that got it elected? No one seems to have an answer.

Gory Tory future? With the victorious Tories preparing to implement more privatization, more anti-trade union legislation, more tax cuts and more prisons, few have been forecasting their imminent demise. But Will Hutton, writing in the London *Guardian*, says the Tories could live to rue their victory, since they now face a growing budget deficit that will force them into some painful decisions. The oil revenues of the '80s are drying up, along with the oil, and the recession and the government's own tax cuts have reduced tax revenues. Hutton also notes that the government's income from privatization will fall as it runs out of things to sell.

Hutton argues that the Conservatives will have to carry out a major devaluation of the pound and reform Britain's parasitical financial institutions if they are to ensure lasting economic recovery. He believes the Tory's lack of a clear vision, encapsulated in the personal drabness of John Major, leaves them ill-equipped to cope with the current sea change in economic thinking as the free-market rhetoric of Thatcher's New Right gives way to a new orthodoxy involving greater state management of the economy along Japanese or German lines. "I judge that the argument is at the same point of take-off as the New Right's was in the mid-'70s," Hutton explained.

If he is right, the tide of history could be shifting toward Labor, leaving the Tories to flounder in the flotsam of Thatcherism. For now, a dispirited Labor Party must place its faith in Hutton's lonely prediction, hoping that Britain's next elections in 1997 will bring a resounding victory for Neil Kinnock's successor.

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By Warren Richey

MIAMI

MANUEL ANTONIO NORIEGA'S CONVICTION earlier this month on drug-trafficking and racketeering charges ended a bitter five-year confrontation between Noriega and the White House. But many legal experts are concerned that it may have set the stage for future confrontations with other world leaders at odds with Washington. And it may ultimately encourage other nations to broadly apply their own laws anywhere in the world.

The Noriega precedent suggests that under George Bush's vision of a new world order, U.S. criminal laws hold more validity than international laws and agreements between nations. The Noriega jurors were specifically instructed by the trial judge not to consider in their deliberations how Noriega was brought to the U.S. Nonetheless, the guilty verdict was viewed by President Bush as vindication of his decision in 1989 to invade Panama, topple its government and return Noriega to Miami to stand trial.

Noriega's attorney, Frank Rubino, warned that the verdict would unleash a modern-day version of the crusades. "The United States government, in its role as world policeman, has seen fit to invade a country and seize its leader," Rubino said. "The people of the United States—through this jury—have condoned that act and sent a message to the rest of the world leaders that they, too, may soon be in our courthouses."

It remains uncertain whether President Bush intends to use the U.S. military again as a globe-trotting SWAT team. But the precedent exists. And the president's actions in the Noriega case are expected to be affirmed as legal, first by the conservative 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta and, if necessary, by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Setting the legal stage: The Supreme Court seemed to anticipate some of the major issues in the Noriega case in an opinion released in 1990, two months after the U.S. invasion of Panama. The case, involving the kidnapping in Mexico of a drug trafficker wanted in the U.S., established that foreign defendants outside the U.S. are not covered by the fundamental protections of the U.S. Constitution against illegal searches and seizures.

"Situations threatening to important American interests may arise halfway around the globe, situations which in the view of the political branches of our government require an American response with armed force," wrote Chief Justice William Rehnquist. "For better or worse, we live in a world of nation-states in which our government must be able to function effectively in the company of sovereign nations."

Justice William Brennan strongly dissented. He argued that if the U.S. sought to investigate and prosecute citizens of foreign countries, those defendants should be afforded all constitutional protections. "If we seek respect for law and order, we must observe these principles ourselves," he wrote. "Lawlessness breeds lawlessness."

U.S. District Judge William Hoeveler, who presided over the Noriega trial, is a Carter appointee with a well-deserved reputation for fairness. He is a careful judge who pays close attention to existing legal precedents. Hoeveler says he has grown tired of trying to explain to people he runs into in the grocery store and on the street why it was legally



Noriega case sets stage for U.S. as global cop

permissible to put Noriega on trial in Miami.

Hoeveler says he is aware that many Americans are appalled by the thought of invading Panama and returning its leader to the U.S. to stand trial. But he insists that he found no basis in the law to challenge what he determined was a foreign policy decision by President Bush.

Close legal reading: The only possible legal ground open to the judge's discretion under existing precedents was whether Noriega himself had been physically mistreated after he was arrested by U.S. forces. Hoeveler says he carefully examined Noriega's surrender at the Papal Nunciature (the Vatican's embassy in Panama City) and his flight to Miami. "The most egregious conduct I could find was the [rock] music that was played [by U.S. forces outside the Papal Nunciature]," Hoeveler said.

For the judge to find in favor of Noriega, U.S. forces would have had to severely torture Noriega over a period of hours. Mere mistreatment alone isn't enough, under existing law. The torture must be so brutal as to "shock the conscience" of the court.

Noriega's attorneys argued in pretrial hearings that invading Panama and causing massive civilian casualties and destruction of property simply to arrest a criminal defendant should be a shock to the conscience of the court. Hoeveler disagreed. He ruled that the law refers specifically to the treatment of the defendant, Noriega. What happened to other Panamanians is not relevant to Noriega's treatment, he said.

Hoeveler also decided that Noriega was not covered by head of state immunity from prosecution. The judge said he rejected this

argument because head of state immunity is not an inevitable right of foreign leaders but rather a privilege granted by the State Department on a case-by-case basis. In Noriega's case, the State Department decided he didn't deserve it.

From President Bush's perspective, the outcome of the Noriega trial couldn't have been better: Noriega was convicted of eight of 10 drug-trafficking and racketeering charges, and the six-month trial ended without any major disclosures of embarrassing U.S. secrets, despite earlier threats by Noriega that he might tell all during his trial.

From Noriega's perspective, the outcome couldn't have been more bleak: He faces up to 120 years in prison.

A fair trial? Noriega's attorney complained after the verdict that large portions of Noriega's defense had been ruled irrelevant by Hoeveler. The most important of those rulings was designed to keep politics out of the trial.

Noriega has repeatedly suggested since his

Noriega's trial was one of the most expensive criminal proceedings in U.S. history. The price tag for the U.S. invasion of Panama was \$163 million, and the trial cost at least \$12 million.

indictment in 1988 that the drug-trafficking and racketeering charges were filed as a political vendetta orchestrated in Washington. His defense team wanted to tell the jury about pressure from the White House for Noriega to step aside; about the falling out between Noriega and U.S. officials; about the economic sanctions; about U.S. support for a coup attempt. They wanted the jury to know that the State Department had offered to drop the indictment if Noriega would agree to leave Panama and never return.

Prosecutors objected and countered that if politics became an issue in the trial, they had ammunition of their own to present to the jury: Noriega's suspected role in ordering the kidnapping, torture and decapitation of political opponent Hugo Spadafora in 1985. Spadafora had accused Noriega of corruption and involvement in drug trafficking. His head was later found in a U.S. mail bag.

Hoeveler decided to avoid the fireworks on both sides. He says his goal was to keep the trial as close as possible to the bounds of the Noriega indictment and to avoid inflaming the jury.

Noriega does have serious grounds to claim unfair treatment by the U.S. government. Ever since his arrest in January 1990, his case has been plagued by heavy-handed tactics bordering on government misconduct which include the following:

- Prison officials tapped his jailhouse telephone. Tapes of Noriega's conversations with his lawyers were leaked to a television reporter and broadcast.

- Shortly after the invasion of Panama, U.S. Justice Department officials froze Noriega's bank accounts in Europe. They did it without any direct evidence linking his accounts to drug money, as required by law. The action meant that Noriega would have no money to fund an effective defense in his court case. After pressure from Hoeveler, \$1.6 million (out of \$23 million) was unfrozen and Noriega's two lawyers were retained as court-appointed counsel. Their legal fees and expenses are being paid by U.S. taxpayers.

- Noriega's lead defense attorney, Raymond Takiff, was coerced because of tax problems into becoming an undercover informant for federal prosecutors working on an unrelated corruption case in Miami. Takiff remained Noriega's attorney throughout the U.S. invasion. Shortly after Noriega's arrest, Takiff resigned, citing health reasons. Noriega first learned of Takiff's conflict of interest two months before his trial began.

Price tag: "It was certainly worth bringing him to justice," President Bush said after the verdict was announced.

But the full costs of the Noriega trial may never be known. Noriega's was one of the most expensive criminal trials in U.S. history, with \$163 million spent for the military invasion and trial costs estimated at \$12 million to \$20 million.

Prosecutors offered convicted drug kingpins unprecedented plea bargains and other inducements to have them testify against Noriega. The process became so blatant that Hoeveler later commented that plea bargaining itself seemed to be on trial alongside Noriega.

Meanwhile, government reports suggest that drug trafficking and money laundering in Panama may be at higher levels today than when Noriega was in power. □

Warren Richey covered the Noriega trial for the Fort Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel*.

By Joel Bleifuss

Wasting away at EPA

One lasting legacy of the Reagan administration is the new standards it set for the behavior of government officials.

Take the case of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Anne Gorsuch and Rita Lavelle, who in the early '80s both misallocated EPA funds, were exposed and then punished. But their crimes became the standard by which their colleagues were judged—and thus the boundary of ethical behavior at the agency was expanded. Consequently, any action by an EPA official is sanctioned as long as it is not strictly illegal. Such ethical pollution has resulted in regulations that value the right of corporations to lay waste to the environment above the right of citizens to live in healthy surroundings.

The EPA's William Sanjour has come up with a series of proposals that would thoroughly reform the agency. In 1979 Sanjour blew the whistle on the Carter administration's decision to protect private industry by removing the teeth from hazardous waste regulations. He has been blowing the whistle ever since. Sanjour has had a lot of time to think about how the EPA could be made to function as originally intended. For the past three years he has had a desk at the agency but nothing to do, since his superiors have refused to assign him any work.

Sanjour's proposal, titled "Why EPA is like it is and what can be done about it," was prepared for and published by the Environmental Research Foundation of Washington, D.C. In his report, Sanjour poses the question, "Why is EPA so often on the wrong side of environmental issues when the EPA is chartered to protect the environment?"

Wimp factor: He begins to answer that question by examining the kind of person who makes and implements the nation's environmental policies. Sanjour characterizes the typical EPA employee as the "the clever wimp," the kind of person "who always knows which way the wind is blowing and whose antennae are very sensitive to strength and power and who seek comfort and security in its embrace." It is an embrace that pays career dividends. "The kind of people who get ahead are those clever ones who can be terribly busy while they procrastinate, obfuscate and consistently come up with superficially plausible reasons for not accomplishing anything," says Sanjour. "In the Toxic Substances Control Act, the Clean Air Act and in dozens of other areas, thousands of people have spent hundreds of millions of dollars over decades with nothing to show for it but their own career advancement."

Those officials who try to do their job and protect the environment suffer the consequences. As Sanjour's fellow EPA whistleblower Hugh Kaufman has put it, the ruling axiom at EPA is: "No good deed will go unpunished."

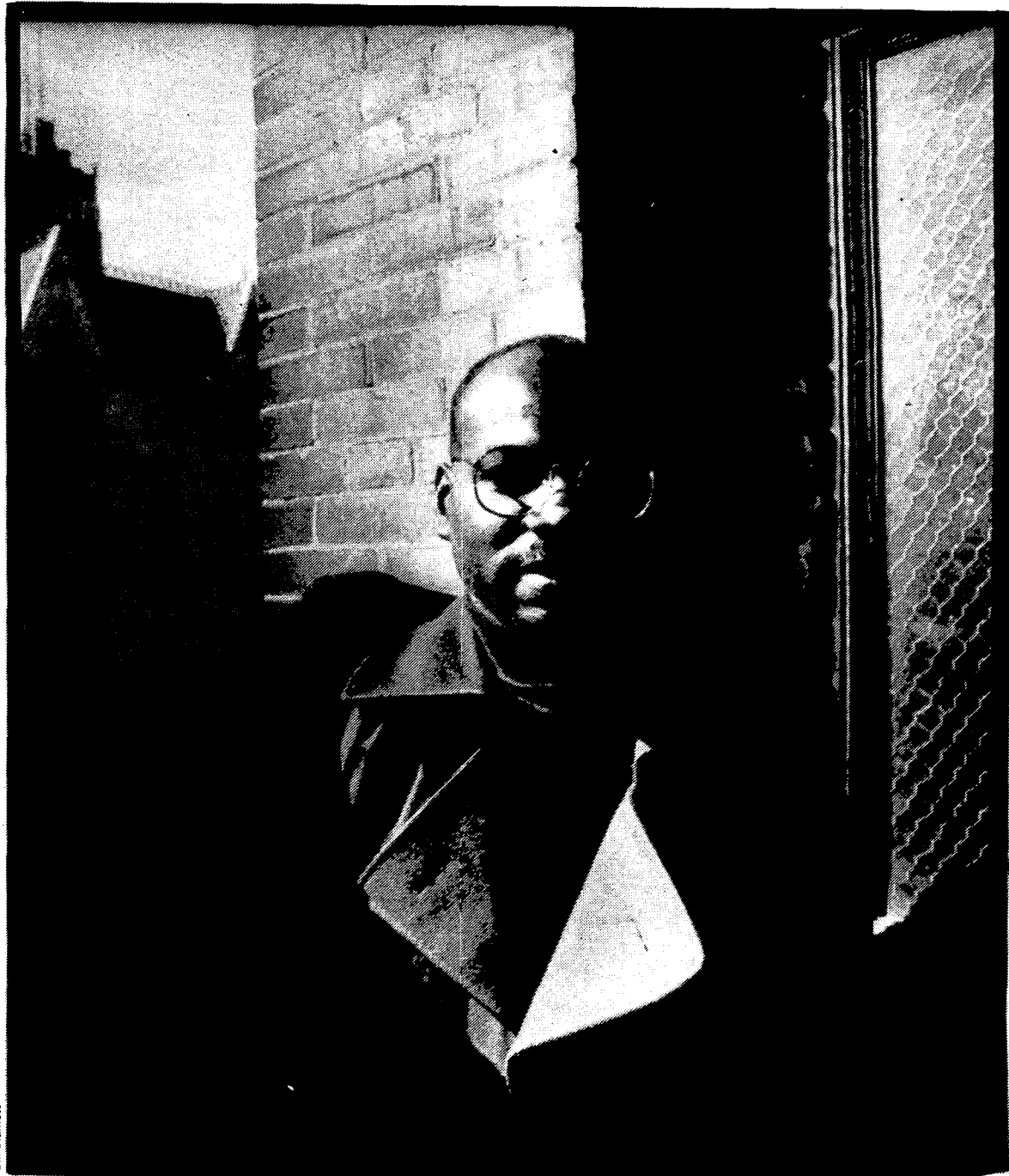
When the EPA does act to protect the environment, says Sanjour, it is only because the agency "was forced or coerced into taking action." He mentions the following three points.

- The EPA, more often than not, opposes congressional attempts to pass tough environmental laws.
- The EPA spends more time and money figuring out how to exempt corporations from regulations than it does enforcing them.
- The EPA's will to regulate is so weak that a proposed regulation must be under a court-ordered deadline (brought by an environmental group) before it will even be considered for the EPA administrator's signature.

Special interests: According to Sanjour, the problems at EPA are shared by all federal regulatory agencies. In other words, the EPA is "simply more concerned with protecting the interests of the parties it is supposed to regulate than in protecting the public interests."

The EPA's "clever wimps" also protect their own interests, using their experience circumventing regulations at the EPA as the ticket to future wealth. In Appendix B of his report, Sanjour lists 20 high-ranking EPA officials who left the agency, entered the revolving door and went on to prosper in the hazardous waste management industry. Most of the former EPA administrators, says Sanjour, are now millionaire waste industry executives. The one administrator who did not enter the waste business was already a millionaire.

Of the 20 high-ranking former EPA officials that Sanjour lists in his appendix, 10 are now employed by the world's largest waste management corporation—Waste Management, Inc. and its subsidiary, Chemical Waste Management. These waste industry executives now work with their former colleagues at EPA in setting up waste disposal and containment facilities around the country.



Bill Stamets

Marlon Riggs: in his own image

By Bill Stamets

Video artist Marlon Riggs watched lots of television as a boy growing up in Texas and remembers seeing Bill Cosby on *I Spy*. As this self-described "TV baby" puts it, "I was too young to know what it meant in any deeper way than I saw someone who somehow resembled me."

In the '60s, black boys and girls saw few black faces on prime time TV. "I think when anyone sees one's image reflected it has the power to seduce one and affirm one," Riggs said in a recent interview. Although color sets soon replaced black and white models, people of color rose to prime time prominence more slowly.

On a more insidious note, Riggs points out that TV is an electronic melting pot that assimilates African-American reality. "Far more important than indicting television for its homogenization of black peoples' identity is the realization that many dispossessed, disenfranchised peoples internalize these codes so that we become complicit in our own oppression," says Riggs. "The notion promoted is a supposedly positive image—which means professional, college educated, speaking standard English, nuclear families, in which, of course, everyone is heterosexual. And even when we know our lives don't abide by that myth, we still hold it in a certain way because we believe that it will be our ticket to an inclusion within this dream of America."

Riggs, who teaches at the University of California

at Berkeley's graduate school of journalism, has just finished *Color Adjustment*, an incisive documentary that tracks the TV portrayal of African-Americans through four decades of network entertainment. In it, Riggs scrutinizes programs from *Amos 'n' Andy* to *The Cosby Show*. The PBS documentary series *P.O.V.* will air Riggs' film, narrated by Ruby Dee, in mid-June.

In his 1987 documentary *Ethnic Notions*, Riggs traced the history of black stereotypes in advertising during America's pre-television era. Narrated and illustrated in a sober third-person style, his encyclo-video of white racism maintains a tone of muted outrage.

But in 1990, in *Tongues Untied*, Riggs took an autobiographical route and celebrated the black gay subculture and its struggle for identity. Boldly first-person, *Tongues Untied* eloquently navigates the eddies of pain and pride that arise in the marginalized realm between the gay mainstream and the black mainstream. Instead of reacting to a historical tide of dehumanizing images, Riggs here pioneers a highly personal iconography of resistance and intimacy. Unlike *Ethnic Notions* and *Color Adjustment*, which survey images generated by the majority culture, *Tongues Untied* originates a militant, poetic image for gay black men.

Broadcast on PBS' *P.O.V.* series last year, this experimental documentary offered one moment of media validation for black gays. *Tongues Untied*, made with National Endowment for the Arts fund-

ing, also supplied Republican presidential pretender Patrick Buchanan with anti-arts ammo. In the Georgia primary, he excerpted several seconds of Riggs' tape for an anti-Bush attack ad. Riggs retaliated with an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* that accused Buchanan of doing a "Willie Horton" and demonizing Riggs as "a militant, Jesus-blaspheming, psychopathic homosexual."

Riggs' next project, titled *Black Is...Black Ain't*, explores the evolving diversity of definitions of African-American identity. Funded by the new Independent Television Service, Riggs says this documentary will address the centrism and chauvinisms within the black community. Dogmas of authenticity and styles of individuality will be Riggs' subject. Vocabulary plays a key role in the name game, as Riggs learned during childhood.

Black identity: Riggs was born in 1957 in Fort Worth, Texas, where his father served as a staff sergeant at the local army base. "I remember when I first started using the word 'black' with my friends, who were all aged seven or eight. A couple of them wanted to kick my butt because at that time 'black' was an insult," says Riggs. "It was an insult that whites hurled at you—'you black fool,' 'you black dog,' 'you black lizard.' And for us to use it, too, well, it carried the same connotation. So at best we might look upon ourselves as 'Negroes' if we were trying to be respectable. 'Black' was definitely something that spoke of shame and dirt and stigma.

"When people would say to me, 'I'm colored' or 'I'm a Negro,' I would say, 'No you're not—you're not a Negro. That's enslavement. You're black.' That's why I'd almost get into fights. And I'd be able to worm my way out of it because I could be very charming and sweet. I was always diminutive and had a high voice compared to most of my friends, so they would physically take pity on me, start to laugh and not want to pummel me."

Riggs credits his mother's politics as the source for the advanced notions he tried out on his buddies. "I was, as with many children, simply imitating what I heard from the adults in the household," he says. "My mother—she wouldn't put up with shit. And she got fired. I mean, if she said something and someone said anything to her, she would slap their faces. She had fights in department stores. I remember this as a kid."

Today, though, he objects to what he terms "the new mythology of the civil-rights era" found in TV shows such as *I'll Fly Away* and movies such as *The Long Walk Home*. These denude the period of its rage and mute traces of resistance. Instead, Southern blacks are depicted as noble and passive to a fault, serving as foils for white characters' moral ascent. In *Color Adjustment*, Riggs juxtaposes '60s sitcoms with civil-rights news footage. However, he selects those rarely recycled scenes where blacks can be seen fighting back.

An American in Göttingen: When he was 13, the family moved to Germany. "I had no conception of Germans," says Riggs. They were as alien as white Americans, but their racism took a different form. "It was not uncommon to go into downtown Göttingen and to have people stop in the middle of the street in their cars, and point and laugh at you. Or, to go to the zoo—and while you are taking pictures, the Germans stop and take pictures of you and come over and rub your head."

Yet living outside America had its advantages. "I felt like I entered utopia," Riggs says, sighing. "All the usual rules seemed to be broken here. It felt like a much freer place for me. I felt I might be able to fit here." Further, on an army base, all the young Americans could share a sense of belonging, bound together by their foreignness.

There was a downside to this open-minded overseas adolescence. Riggs was unschooled in Ameri-

can fashions and concerns. "When I got to Harvard I was assaulted with this pressure to conform. I wasn't a 'black,' according to what was passing as black at that time. I didn't know all the hip terms. I wasn't privy to the hair styles, the way of dressing, the way of walking.

"I was really not acculturated as a black American, quite frankly. I think the Germany experience opened my eyes to the possibilities of different kinds of relationships and different identities—all of which could be respected, even though I wasn't thinking on that level at that time."

At Harvard, Riggs discovered vast chapters of African-American history that were vital news to this bookish kid from Texas. And for him, video looked like the best channel for sharing this heritage. For graduate school, Riggs decided to go to Berkeley. He felt the Bay Area "offered more of an opportunity to finally explore my extremely repressed sexuality." And Berkeley gave him the opportunity to make films. He earned his masters degree making his first documentary, *Long Train Running—the Story of the Oakland Blues*.

Although he was trained to make documentaries according to news-industry standards, Riggs began taking artistic chances, challenging the typical nexus of image and authority in the media. In *Color Adjustment*, Riggs annotates excerpts from *Beulah*, *I Spy*, *Julia*, *Roots* and *The Cosby Show* by superimposing a series of questions such as "We need more positive images—but what is positive?"; "Can 'positive' images be equally negative?"; "Is this positive?"; and "Is this positive?"

Role models? "Because of what images have done to black people in America—in terms of justifying and legitimizing racism and disenfranchising black people—there is the inverted notion that if we have the right images we can achieve our salvation," Riggs told a racially diverse crowd recently at Chicago's Randolph Street Gallery. "There's a way that we have overinvested in the power of images because of the clear way that they have demonstrably harmed us. But I don't think the opposite equation holds true."

Unfortunately, one pivotal producer, Bill Cosby, refused to appear in *Color Adjustment*. This TV hero from Riggs' boyhood is a historical resource that is visibly absent, although *The Cosby Show* is analyzed as the ultimate assimilation sitcom. Says Riggs, "I don't believe that Bill Cosby is a Reaganite Republican, but I think the show, in terms of its politics of race, very much accorded with the politics of Reagan conservatism. That show positioned black people in such a way that none of the social remedies to racial inequity were necessary anymore."

"I talked to Cosby after *Color Adjustment* was finished. He was quite pissed with the representation of his show. He essentially lectured me for about an hour and a half about misinterpreting him in a fairly cordial but condescending way in which a father talks to a child."

Riggs says he endured this "Father Knows Best" episode but regretted he couldn't incorporate the tirade in his tape. "As long as he wasn't going to sue me, I was quite happy," Riggs chuckles. "He said, 'I don't believe in having these kinds of debates in public. You can call me up anytime you want to and talk on the phone. That's the way they did it in the olden days between Richard Wright and James Baldwin.'"

To a new generation of black directors, that was the "Bronzeville" Age. Today is the season of *Living Color*. As Cosby told Riggs, broadcasting debates among blacks about image and identity only serves to "arm the enemy." But for Riggs, the criticism of media is the medium of criticism. □

Bill Stamets is a Chicago-based writer, photographer and filmmaker.

Sanjour observes, "The promoting of sites for commercial hazardous waste facilities is, and always has been, a very big part of EPA's hazardous waste activities—[despite the fact that] there is no legislative mandate for EPA to promote the siting of hazardous waste management facilities."

The results are shocking conflicts of interests. Sanjour explains: "As a business, [the waste industry's] income is produced by taking in wastes through the gate. Waste is money, the more the better. Expense is incurred by treating the waste so as to protect human health and the environment. This costs money. A successful business maximizes income and does everything it can to reduce expenses. ... [The waste industry] by its very nature must do everything it can to thwart serious attempts to reduce the amount of hazardous waste produced in America and at the same time take any shortcuts it can get away with in the treatment of that waste." And it is a little easier to thwart those attempts and arrange those shortcuts when you are a former EPA administrator.

And woe be those citizens who do not want to live next to an incinerator or other waste industry operations. Such folks are labeled "selfish, unpatriotic NIMBYs [Not in My Back Yards]," says Sanjour. "Every administrator of EPA has felt it his duty to tell the public that they are terrible people if they don't let some get-rich-quick huckster build a landfill or incinerator in their backyard." This admonition, however, is usually not enough. So, as Sanjour notes, the EPA sponsors seminars to train "these hucksters how to overcome public opposition."

NIMBYs' revenge: Turning his attention to how these endemic violations of the public trust can be curtailed, Sanjour, advising that "realism must replace idealism," offers 14 proposals, seven of which I will examine.

1. Congress could pass a one-sentence law that says: "No regulatory agency may spend appropriated funds to promote or to advocate the use of the products or services which it regulates." Such legislation would have the effect of putting the EPA out of the business of siting waste disposal sites.

2. Congress could pass a law that would take the responsibility for writing environmental regulations from the EPA and transfer those duties to a new agency that answers to Congress and not the president.

3. In addition to protecting whistle-blowers, Congress could encourage them to step forward by offering a reward when the whistle-blower's charges prove correct. Such a reward could include a promotion and a cash bonus that is proportionate to the importance of the revelation. Sanjour suggests a maximum "carrot" of \$100,000.

4. Congress could pass legislation that would allow government officials to be held liable for damages resulting from their failure to do their duty. Faced with the possibility of civil suits, derelict EPA officials might be encouraged to take their work a little more seriously.

5. In the same vein, legislation could be drawn up to expand the liability provisions that now govern Superfund sites and make corporations responsible for more of their environmental pollution. "The fear of liability is a much greater incentive for industry to do the right thing than the fear of the EPA," writes Sanjour.

6. State legislatures and city councils could pass and then enforce laws that would prohibit their governments from doing business with chronic corporate lawbreakers. Critics argue that "bad-boy laws" would put corporate disposal operators out of business, leaving no one left to run the hazardous waste business. Sanjour responds, "That's sort of like saying that we have to let racketeers run the legal gambling casinos because no one else knows how."

7. Congress could pass a law that would prevent "political appointees and senior executive service personnel from accepting any form of direct or indirect compensation from any person or corporations regulated by their agency for a period of five years after they left government service." Sanjour, who would include lawyers in such a provision, says the result of such legislation would be to "keep out the flood of opportunists who now permeate the government and let in people with a real desire to serve their country and their community." He dismisses the argument that such a statute would prevent good people from entering government service. "Good people," he says, "do not use government service as a means of getting rich quick."

Sanjour has come forward with workable solutions to the crisis at EPA. It is now up to the nation's environmental organizations to figure out ways to force Congress to implement such reforms. One way to do this would be for a coalition of environmental groups to draw up a package of legislative proposals that congressional candidates would be asked to endorse. Those politicians who refused could then be targeted with a negative ad campaign condemning them as an enemy of the environment.

By Jim McNeill

Martin Marietta's mercurial enterprise

When *In These Times* last checked up on the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, correspondent Gordon Robbins reported that radioactive frogs had escaped from a contaminated pond inside the nuclear-weapons complex. (See *In These Times*, Jan. 22.) But glowing frogs aren't the only things fleeing Oak Ridge. A citizens group has learned that millions of pounds of mercury may also be migrating from an Oak Ridge weapons plant. And a physician who began investigating diseases he thought might be linked to heavy-metal poisoning and radiation exposure may soon be forced out of Oak Ridge's single hospital—a hospital that is closely connected to Oak Ridge's largest weapons contractor.

In 1983, the Department of Energy (DOE) first admitted that mercury was leaking from Oak Ridge's Y-12 weapons plant, run by Martin Marietta Energy Systems for the federal government. The DOE has claimed that between 200,000 and 1 million pounds of mercury have leaked from Y-12 since the plant's inception.

But DOE documents recently obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request by the Government Accountability Project indicate that much more mercury may actually have leaked out of Oak Ridge's Y-12 plant—as much as 2.4 million pounds. If accurate, that figure would exceed the amount of mercury released in Minamata, the Japanese town whose residents were the victims of massive mercury releases in the '50s.

Martin Marietta has long maintained that its Oak Ridge facilities pose no undue health risk either to its employees or nearby residents. Martin Marietta has traditionally received support for that opinion from officials at the city's Methodist Medical Center.

Hypocritical oath: But soon after Dr. William K. Reid began practicing at the Methodist Medical Center in November 1990, he noticed what he thought was an unusually large number of bladder and kidney cancers—cancers that are often linked to environmental toxins. Reid, an oncologist and hematologist, also noticed a high incidence of rare blood disorders. He suspected the conditions might be connected to elevated levels of toxic metals in his patients' bodies. Reid feared the heavy metals were coming from Martin Marietta's Oak Ridge operations.

In August, he asked the hospital for past records of patients with bladder and kidney cancer. He never received them. Two weeks later, however, Reid says, "The hospital officials began aggressively looking at all my charts." In January, he was brought before the hospital's Credentials Committee and, according to Reid, was criticized for spending too much money on "unnecessary" treatments. When he was brought before the committee, Reid says, "They told me I was too academic and I should be doing these things in an academic center."

During another January meeting before the committee, Reid says his colleagues told him that if he would leave "quietly," they would attempt to keep his name from the National Practitioner Data Bank, a federal listing of doctors the government considers unqualified to practice medicine. An outraged Reid promptly filed a lawsuit against the hospital, its administrators and federal officials in charge of the data bank.

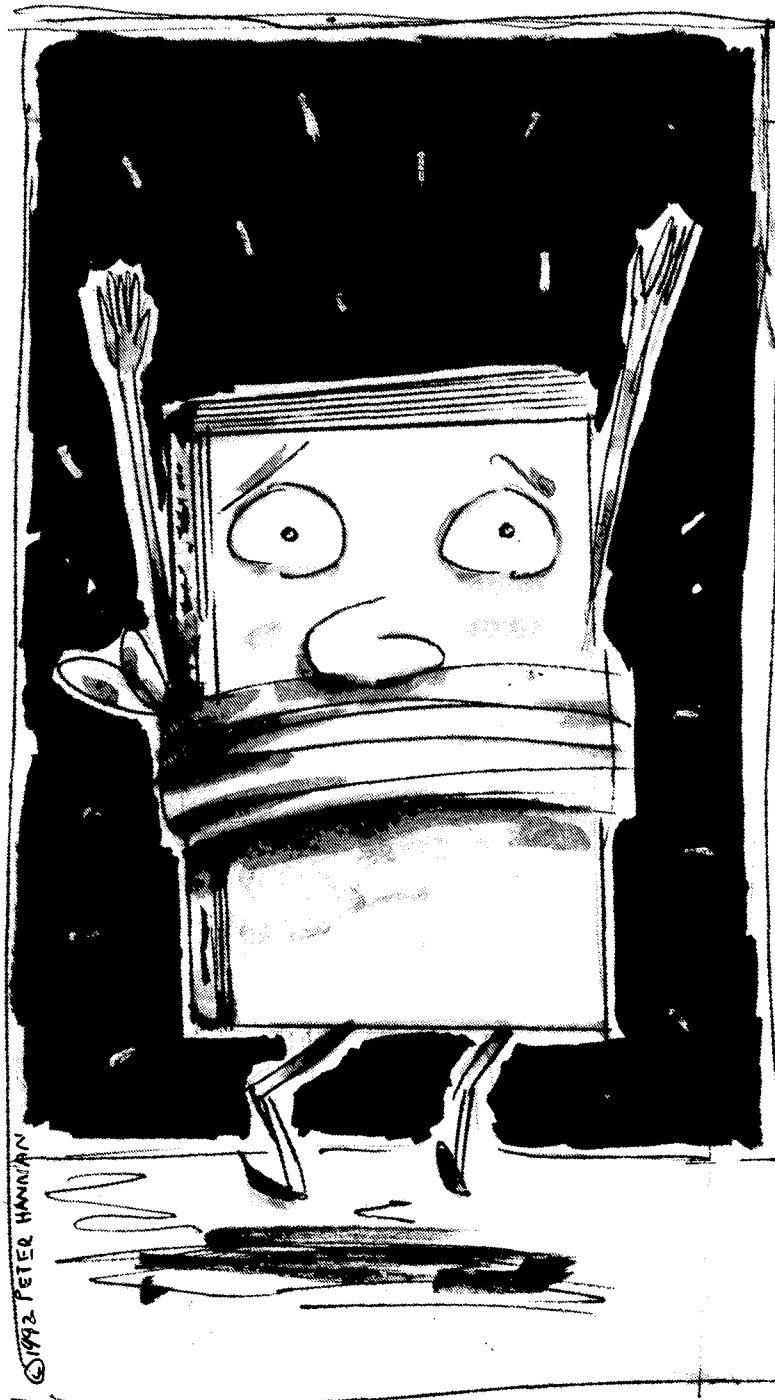
"The law itself is a very good idea," says Reid. "But as the law stands now, the physician has no rights of appeal. They can easily destroy your career. In every hospital I've worked in before here, I had no problems, but suddenly I'm under attack."

When asked to respond to Reid's claims, Barbara Blackmond, a Pittsburgh attorney representing the hospital, said, "I can't go into the particulars since the hearing's still pending. But every physician at every hospital undergoes a provisional appointment period, when their work is subject to careful review."

Martin Marietta's mercurial executive: Clyde Hopkins, a hospital board member and president of Martin Marietta Energy Systems, told Knoxville's *News-Sentinel* that Reid will receive a full and fair hearing from the medical center. Though Hopkins said he could judge Reid fairly if the board was asked to rule in the case, Hopkins told the paper, "If it came to a vote, I would dismiss myself."

Hopkins may have wished the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs would have dismissed him during recent testimony he gave about his company's disposal practices. Hopkins was called to testify about Martin Marietta's practice of covering up information on illegal shipments of enriched uranium to commercial waste dumps. Hopkins told the House Committee, "The practice of removing certain information from documents accompanying shipments of waste to commercial disposal facilities is one that has been in existence for many years at the Y-12 weapons ... plant and it stems from security concerns."

INSHORT



A necessary revolution in the nation's libraries

Not many would go looking for revolutionaries in the nation's libraries. But they're there.

As the U.S. continues into the information age, libraries face depleted funding and soaring costs. But libraries suffer not just from budget crises, but also from the American Library Association's (ALA) betrayal of the institution's democratic ethos as an agent for education and cultural development.

Members of the Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG) are working to change that. The PLG is a hard-hitting insurgent movement within the librarians' professional association. The organization was formed in January 1990 by ALA members working to ensure that public libraries continue to fulfill their role as an outlet for ideas analyzing society.

"An anti-democratic mentality bent on transforming libraries into entertainment centers taking its cues from giants in the information and publishing industry has emerged in the profession," says PLG member

Elaine Harger, librarian at Empire State College in New York. "This move toward commercialization treats information as a merchandise to be popularly marketed, belying the library's democratic, educational mission."

What does this corporate approach mean for library patrons? One effect is on book selection. Community libraries typically acquire books on the basis of high circulation or sales and not on intellectual significance or the broadening of the range of ideas in a library's collection. This policy is widely advocated in library science literature and in the pronouncements of library administrators.

Across the nation, PLG members report their library collections are stacked in favor of the least offensive, least controversial materials that are most aligned with mass media culture. Library systems typically contain hundreds of copies of the works of Danielle Steele or Lee Iacocca's autobiography, for example, and just a few copies of Noam Chomsky's or Herbert Schiller's latest work. The Alternative Press Index is rarely found in community libraries.

"The books, periodicals and videos acquired are strong evidence

of the library profession's service to the cultural, economic and political status quo," says PLG member Mark Rosenzweig, librarian at La Guardia Community College of New York. "Our group sees libraries as institutions which nurture a wide variety of ideas and bring to the public's attention social problems and suggest possible solutions."

In former times, libraries were known as the "people's universities." But now they have become an oddity in American society. They are state-subsidized, decentralized institutions delivering information freely to anyone interested.

In fact, more than 80 percent of funding for the nation's 15,000 public libraries comes from local governments. The waning support of the federal government amounts to 1 percent of funding.

The 400-member PLG generates vociferous debate within the profession. Predictably, it has provoked the accusation that it engages in politically-correct chest beating. In a November 1991 *Library Journal* column, Herbert White, an influential professor at the school of library and information science at Indiana University, Bloomington, blasted the PLG's work, writing, "I have expressed my concern about letting that virus creep into library education."

Maintaining this activist presence in the 50,000-member ALA, the PLG can list among its successes directing the profession's attention to Israeli censorship in the Occupied Territories. It helped encourage the ALA to co-publish *Information Freedom and Censorship: World Report 1991*, detailing such Israeli intellectual atrocities as the burning of a Palestinian journalist's private library by Israeli authorities and the months-long denial of reading material to people detained without trial.

Members play a critical role in the ALA's "Intellectual Freedom" and "International Relations" committees, and the "Social Responsibilities Round Table." After a long, bitter debate, all of these ALA groups issued controversial anti-Gulf War statements last year to the chagrin of the ALA establishment.

The PLG's ambitious agenda includes stopping the privatizing of public information, preserving libraries as a free public good, reporting on the dangerous and growing symbiotic relationship between libraries and huge publishing conglomerates, and attempting to "bridge the artificial and destructive gap" among the nation's 115,000 public, academic and special libraries.

These librarians shake up the ALA and vow to remind us that the library's historic role is not that of an entertainment house but an intellectual sanctuary and social gadfly.

The PLG can be reached c/o Empire State College School of Labor Studies Library, 330 W. 42nd Street, 4th floor, New York, NY, 10036.

—Mike Leon

By Paul Hockenos

BERLIN

MOST GERMANS LOOKED ON STUNNED as the results from the two April 5 state elections flashed across their TV screens. In northern Schleswig-Holstein, the extreme-right Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) captured 6.3 percent of the vote, while in southwestern Baden-Württemberg,

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the like-minded Republikaner Partei (REP) pulled down 10.9 percent, both dramatic increases over their showings of 1 percent and less in those states four years ago.

The Germans' expression of shock, however, was one of having feared the worst and then watching it happen. On the heels of the National Front's success last month in France and the triumphs of similar xenophobic right-wing parties in Belgium, Austria and Sweden, the ultra-right's gains in the two former West German states were hardly surprising. The mainstream parties' incessant wrangling over the country's political asylum statute, implicitly the "foreigner problem," had conveniently paved the way for the ultra-right. With demagogic slogans such as "German policies for German citizens," the ultra-right simply takes the logic of the Bonn establishment a step further.

The only real element of surprise lay in that little had been seen or heard of the extremists since the REP's dramatic rise on the West German political scene in 1989. With unification, history overtook the ultra-right parties for a moment, delivering them pounding defeats in most of the 1990 and 1991 elections. The theme that the right alone had sounded for years—German unification—had overnight become official state policy, leaving the extreme right temporarily disarmed.

In late 1989 and 1990 West German elections for the state legislatures, the REP's support sank beneath the 5 percent hurdle necessary for parliamentary representation. In the East, "the unification chancellor," Helmut Kohl, and the ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU) rode the wave of nationalist euphoria against the backdrop of billowing red, black and gold flags. In the first all-German federal elections in December 1990, the REP managed only 2.1 percent of the total vote.

Yet the electorally oriented ultra-right's slide in Germany had far from spelled the end of the "New Right" movement that had emerged throughout Western Europe in the last decade.

Going it alone: Until the '80s, the majority of nationalist conservative and ultra-right elements in West Germany made their homes in the right wings of one of the mainstream conservative parties, the CDU and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU). But the CDU CSU's early '80s Ostpolitik of rapprochement with the German Democratic Republic (GDR) proved more than the conservatives' right wing could stomach. The time was finally ripe, they decided, to strike out on their own.

The stated goal of West Germany's early New Right thinkers was to bring the German right "out from the shadow of Auschwitz," to distance the movement from the damning stigma of the Nazi past. The right-wing intellectuals sought to influence postwar political culture in a way that would destigmatize the



The rise and fall and rise of Germany's New Right

sensus. They argued that an ultra-right political movement could be possible only when its language and assumptions had first become an accepted part of the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) political discourse.

U.S. President Ronald Reagan's 1985 participation in a service in Bitburg, West Germany—commemorating the 40th anniversary of the end of World War II—was exactly what the New Right thinkers had in mind. In bowing his head with Kohl at the graves of fallen German soldiers, including members of the SS, the president's minute of silence implicitly placed the deaths of the Nazis on a moral plane equivalent to the tragedy of those who lost their lives at Nazi hands. The gesture went another step toward "normalizing" Germany's fascist legacy.

The New Right's second front was the construction of a modern image for the movement. They replaced the brown shirts and swastikas of the past with a professional, young veneer. They dropped terminology such as "Aryan supremacy" and "*Blut und Boden*" society for their own no less reactionary versions of "European unity" and "environmental protection."

In order to free neo-fascism from the ballast of Nazism, the New Right sacrificed Adolf Hitler. The clear aim of their guarded critiques of National Socialism was to excuse German fascism from the Nazi regime's two most ignominious crimes: the Holocaust and the World War. In exchange for the overtly racial theories, the New Rightists embraced cosmetic theories of "national identity" and "ethnic specificity," which distinguished a similar hierarchy of peoples. The product was slogans such as "Germans be proud to be Germans, Turks be proud to be Turks—United against Communism and Racial Mixing."

The New Right offers the ethnic community, the *Volks-gemeinschaft*, as an alternative to the meaning that eludes people in modern post-industrial society. Not without justification, they argue that modernity has "uprooted" man, cast him as an atomized individual into an alienating, high-tech world. Yet, rather than confront the dilemma of modernization with bonding forms of civil society and social community, the New Right retreats into the realm of tradition, family and nation.

"Proud to be German": The REP's meteoric rise in the late '80s formally announced the New Right's arrival in the FRG. Founded in 1983, the new party rallied behind the

60-year-old local radio journalist and former Waffen SS man Franz Schönhuber. Schönhuber maneuvered around the category of the "old Nazi," while making plain that not only was he proud to have been in the Waffen SS, but that there was, indeed, something worthwhile that Germans could salvage from the Nazi era. His two favorite slogans: "I'm proud to be a German" and "We want to stay German."

Schönhuber peddled his message at first to receptive crowds in Bavarian beer halls, and then across the Federal Republic, that the German petty bourgeoisie were the real losers in modern post-industrial society. The traditional German family's sense of security and closeness had been lost, he argued. In tirades against the Federal Republic's "liberal" immigration and political asylum statutes, the Republicans tapped a potent combination of nationalism, racism and social frustration. Only drastic curbs on foreigners in Germany would "prevent the misuse and injury of German citizens, their safety and their *Gemeinwesen* [communal essence]."

The REP's initial rise and fall occurred within the space of one year. In January 1989, the party captured a shocking 7.5 percent of the vote in West Berlin municipal elections. Some working-class districts delivered to the

The ultra-right is simply taking the logic of the Bonn establishment a step further.

extremists 20 percent of their support, and similar successes followed. In June, 2 million West Germans voted for the REP in the European Parliament elections, sending Schönhuber and five colleagues to the Strasbourg parliament.

Analyses of voting patterns revealed that it was primarily the racist demagoguery directed against foreign nationals living in West Germany that accounted for the party's victories. Ninety-seven percent of REP voters admitted that they were not prepared to recognize foreign nationals living in the FRG as "fellow citizens."

Although the REP crassly linked the country's economic and social problems with the presence of foreigners in Germany, those districts that voted heavily for the REP had only minimal numbers of foreign residents.

In other words, REP voters were not anti-foreigner because their neighbors were Arabs. In fact, in city districts where high concentrations of foreigners resided, the turnout for the REP sank below the average.

Nor did the party rally large ranks of the unemployed or underprivileged. The average REP voter boasted a middle-class—or higher—standard of living. The small business people, bureaucrats and wage earners who backed the REP did so more out of their fear of unemployment than because of their own actual unemployment. A disproportionately high percentage of REP voters were male (three times more men than women), young (many between 18 and 23 years old) and with lower levels of education than other voters. The REP also scored exceptionally well among people living in the urban "social housing projects."

Fear and loathing in Germany: The New Right's success in charting a course between the old-school neo-fascists and the CDU CSU failed to eliminate the array of openly racial factions from the right-wing scene. Unlike the National Front in France, the Republicans were unable to unite the spectrum of ultra-right forces around their campaign. Revamped neo-fascist parties such as the DVU also rely upon primarily electoral strategies, although not to the exclusion of courting skinheads or espousing violence.

With the arrival of the REP, the 1971-founded DVU dropped in numerical strength to second place among the FRG's ultra-right parties. The DVU sees itself as a "supra-party movement," encompassing such groups as the Popular Movement for a General Amnesty (for Nazi war criminals) and the Initiative to Restrict Foreigners. Behind the neo-fascists' standard democratic lip-service, the DVU promotes an aggressive xenophobia and caustic anti-Semitism. Like the other neo-fascist parties, the DVU demands strong-arm "law and order" policies to halt "foreigner-inspired" crime and drug trafficking.

With the exception of the size of their recent triumphs, the ultra-right's victories offered few new surprises. During the campaigns, the parties maintained next to no profile in the states. The DVU ran its multi-million mark "cellar campaign" with 20 to 30 people. Most of its propaganda was distributed through the mail from its Munich headquarters.

The vast majority of ultra-right voters were neither neo-Nazis (many came from the ranks of the Social Democrats), nor were they largely the underprivileged. Most of the upstanding burghers that voted right did so to express their uncertainty and fear about the looming costs of the unification. Their vote constituted a clear protest against the major parties, which they feel have left the "little people" out on their own. Amid the raging debate around the asylum law—which the CDU, above all, has manipulated to account for Germany's every plight—voters also pinned the source of their frustrations and fears on the presence of "too many" foreigners in Germany.

But the major political parties have yet to get the real message, namely, that the people know full well that someone, somehow is going to have to pay for German unification. The CDU and the Social Democrats have rushed to establish a "round table" to join forces in tackling the country's problems. First on the agenda: the asylum policy. □

IN THESE TIMES APRIL 22-28, 1992 7

Can Cambodians start tilling the killing fields?



Cambodian refugees returning home receive "resettlement kits" at a U.N. reception center.

By Tony Gillotte

SISOPHON, CAMBODIA

AFTER SPENDING SEVEN YEARS IN A RICKETY thatched hut with raw sewage running by his front door, Heng Than Thy and his family are finally leaving the Site 2 refugee camp on Thailand's border with Cambodia and going home.

"I heard we will stay three to seven days in the reception center at Sisophon," said Heng, a pseudonym used to conceal his identity from Cambodia's rival factions. "Then trucks will take us to the land we've been given to farm."

Heng, smiling and clearly hopeful about returning to his native Battambang province in western Cambodia, is among the first refugees to return to the country under the historic repatriation plan overseen by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). But Heng's journey, foretold with such promise, could become a symbol for one of the sadder ironies of recent history.

Now that the long-suffering Cambodian refugees are ready to go home, the UNHCR's relief effort is nearly broke. With funds barely trickling in from the West, many worry that the U.N. won't be able to ensure the refugees' safety as they return to a country in which the Khmer Rouge—brutal rulers of Cambodia in the '70s—are still a powerful presence.

On tour: In early March, the Thai Foreign Ministry and UNHCR invited a group of journalists to cross the Thai border to inspect the preparations for resettlement within Cambodia.

The UNHCR's resettlement program, which began moving refugees out of the border camps on March 30, aims to resettle more than 370,000 Cambodians living in eight camps along the Thai border. Many will be returning to Cambodia for the first time since fleeing the murderous Pol Pot regime in the late '70s.

The tour included a visit at the UNHCR reception center at Sisophon, where the first group of returnees were processed.

While briefing reporters at Sisophon, UNHCR spokesman Iain Guest talked about

his expectations for the massive repatriation drive. "The UNHCR wants to create momentum," said Guest, looking weary and a little harried as he spun to take questions from a circle of reporters. "And we want to do it as responsibly as we possibly can."

"We have 25 long houses here," he explained, pointing to a smart row of newly constructed bamboo buildings within the fenced-in reception center compound. "And each has room for 10 families. Generators, pumps and construction are not completed, but in principle they are finished and ready to receive people."

Guest explained that the returnees will be medically screened, issued materials to construct a house and, later, will be given water pumps and other farming implements. After a two- or three-day stay in the reception center, the refugees will be taken by truck to lands designated by the Cambodian government.

Best laid plans: But the scenario laid out by Guest is viewed skeptically by many refugees. Back in Site 2, Than Vo, a 27-year-old refugee who had lived in the camp for eight years, expressed reservations with the plan. A few days earlier, Vo had joined an advance party of returnees representing each border camp sent to inspect the reception center at Sisophon.

Vo's group came away with serious reservations about the efficacy of the UNHCR repatriation plan. Vo spoke solemnly of his concerns about land ownership, identification cards and, most importantly, physical security once back in Cambodia. "The place where we [will] build our house is seven to 12 kilometers from the land for farming," said Vo, still not believing his own words. "The governor said he could not provide security [for us] if we put our house on the land we farm."

The advance party was also taken to see agricultural land in Banteay Meanchey province set aside for the returnees. It had been identified by Sisophon district and local commune leaders and allocated by the Phnom Penh government. Vo and his group said the land was not very good "because nobody else wants to use it."

Banteay Meanchey Governor Ith Loeur told the advance party it was impossible to provide land near the village because it was owned by local residents.

Despite the concerns of Vo and others, the UNHCR resettlement has proceeded as planned. On March 30, Phase I of the UNHCR repatriation plan began when 527 returnees arrived at the Sisophon reception center. Ten thousand more will follow in April and 40,000 per month after that. A total of six centers will assist returnees in obtaining farmland and a housing kit for settlement.

Phase II is scheduled to start in June, when all six reception centers should be operating at peak capacity. But the beginning of Phase II coincides with the onset of the rainy season. And no one knows how the remaining 320,000 refugees will travel to and from the

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reception centers if heavy rains make the roads impassable.

The UNHCR blames its makeshift preparations on the need to have all Cambodians back in time for a national election set for early 1993. The election was stipulated in the Paris Peace agreement signed in October 1991 by the Phnom Penh government and the three resistance factions, the Khmer People's National Liberation front, the Khmer Rouge and forces affiliated with Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

But the timetable established in Paris may be complicated by continuing unrest within Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge recently lured two Site 8 leaders into Cambodia for a meeting and held them until early April. The two leaders had been suspected by the Khmer Rouge of being too much in favor of the UNHCR repatriation plan. The move, along with fighting between Khmer Rouge forces and government troops in late March, sparked suspicions that the Khmer Rouge hope to derail the peace process.

Laws of return: The returnees themselves face their own serious questions as the mass departures from the Thai border camps begin. For example, nobody from the UNHCR seems to know how certain refugees were selected over others to return first. Officials of the Western relief agencies who operate the camps only shake their heads and say they were not consulted.

So far, section leaders within the refugee camps, who act as grass-roots representatives of Cambodia's political factions, seem to be dominating the selection process.

"Section leaders in Site 2 told us we were going back and to be prepared," said Heng, remembering how he was selected to be among the first returnees after undergoing a UNHCR registration process in which refugees were asked to indicate their location preference.

At a briefing for reporters in Site 8 camp on the border, Jahanshah Assadi, UNHCR field officer and the man responsible for implementing the repatriation plan, said, "Selection of people going back is done by availability of land. We don't pick the people; the people select the land."

Having been selected to be among the first returnees, Heng's own family has experienced unexpected pressure from all sides.

"My wife wanted to continue working with members of Site 2's Khmer Women's Association, but they're going to a different area," he admitted, hesitantly acknowledging life was quickly becoming more complicated than the relative simplicity of Site 2.

Also, Site 2 section chiefs provided a surprising and different sort of pressure. Under

orders from the camps' divided political leadership, representing the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), section chiefs have been offering returnees inducements to choose areas where KPNLF factions would like to set up a party office—this in preparation for the early '93 elections.

"They [KPNLF factions] don't tell people [they have] to go," continued Heng, lowering his voice. "They just say, if you go to the KPNLF places they will give you a tractor, a pig or a generator."

The UNHCR has determined that the majority of the border refugee population is from four western provinces in Cambodia. But UNHCR Field Officer Assadi said, "They all wish to go to Battambang province," an area relatively free of factional infighting. "We don't have land for all those who want to go back there," Assadi admits, "but we're working on it."

The Cambodian government has been slow to designate land for resettlement. Phnom Penh still hasn't decided how best to assimilate the newly arriving Cambodians who they suspect have learned valuable professional and organizational skills while living in the border camps. The returnees could easily become a significant political threat in areas in which they settle.

Cash flow problems: Speaking at Site 8 on the Thai border in late March, Assadi acknowledged the plan's major weakness, and on which all else depends: the availability of enough money. "Of the original \$37 million received by the U.N. from member nations," he said, "\$34 million has already been spent, leaving only \$3 million left to continue our work."

Those funding problems were echoed by Yasushi Akashi, the Japanese head of the U.N. Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), which is overseeing the peace process, including the repatriation program. Akashi said the entire operation could cost about \$3 billion, and that serious problems remain in financing it.

Japan has pledged \$25 million toward UNTAC's estimated \$200 million start-up costs and another \$25 million toward the cost of repatriation. But Japan has had a difficult time getting its parliament to approve the use of Japanese troops as part of U.N. peacekeeping forces in Cambodia and elsewhere. (See *In These Times*, Dec. 25).

Though many questions remain about UNTAC's resettlement program, perhaps the most troubling ones concern the fate of the refugees once they actually return home: Will there be resentment of returnees by local Cambodians as they watch their new neighbors receiving a new house, monthly food supplies and assistance with their farms? Will returnees try to sell their land and move to Phnom Penh? Will they get identification cards from the government that allow them the important right to travel and vote? Are they prepared for an expected epidemic of drug-resistant malaria? What about their human rights?

Finally, with UNTAC's funding crisis, who will protect the returnees if fighting should erupt again in Cambodia? UNHCR spokesman Guest had few answers.

"We don't have enough money or time," Guest admitted. "But the U.N. secretary general has made a total funding appeal of \$116 million to keep this thing [repatriation plan] going. Who knows what will happen when the rainy season descends at the beginning of June?" Guest asked, his eyes rolling skyward. "Let's just get this thing going and see what happens."

Tony Gillotte is a freelance writer based in Bangkok, Thailand.

DEMOCRACY



Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori playing to the crowd. Will he run roughshod over them?

Peru's coup reveals fault lines in Latin America

By Joe Goldman

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

THE COUP THAT SHOOK PERU TWO WEEKS ago cannot be considered surprising. During the month prior to President Alberto Fujimori's dissolution of Peru's legislative and judicial branches, rumors had been rife throughout Latin America of increased unrest within the region's armed forces.

For months, Latin Americans have waited to see which country would be the first democratic domino to fall. Now that Peru's democracy has toppled, many wonder whether Fujimori—elected in 1990 without any party support—still wields power or if he functions now as a figurehead for the military?

"Bordaberryzacion": Fujimori's action has its regional precedence in Uruguay in mid-1973 when then-President Juan Maria Bordaberry shook the century-old democratic foundations of his country by dissolving the Congress. Although the Uruguayan constitution permitted the executive branch to dismiss lawmakers, the president was obliged by law to call new legislative elections. Bordaberry never did that, and the military gradually usurped power, dropping the democratic facade completely in mid-1976. According to a U.N. fact-finding report, the brutal Uruguayan regime that followed proceeded to torture one out of every 61 Uruguayans, the highest rate of torture in the world at the time.

The Uruguayan situation went out of con-

trol so quickly and thoroughly that it gave rise to a new word in the Latin American lingo: *bordaberryzacion*. It means an institutional coup d'etat where the presidential position is utilized as an excuse for a military takeover. That word is now being used by most Latin American political pundits to describe Peru. In both countries, an extremely uneven distribution of wealth gave rise to insurgent movements which fought bloody battles against police and military forces. The military in both countries exacerbated tensions by directing some of its most brutal

"At times a benevolent dictator can be more desirable," said one Morgan Stanley banker.

attacks against innocent populations instead of the guerrillas.

While the U.S. gave its tacit approval to the Uruguayan coup, the Bush administration has so far expressed its opposition to Fujimori's action. Prior to the coup, however, divisions in the administration over drug-war policy sent dangerously mixed signals to the Peruvian government and armed forces. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency wanted to train an autonomous police force

in Peru to combat narcotraffickers, thus avoiding the corruption of the current anti-drug squads made up of members of the Peruvian armed forces. But Pentagon and U.S. intelligence officials disagreed and wanted to funnel more money into the military. The State Department had wobbled in the middle.

Fujimori's harsh attacks against U.S. drug policy last month at the Anti-Drug Summit in San Antonio, Texas, alienated Washington and foreshadowed the cozy deal between the Peruvian president and his armed forces.

Though the U.S. has since suspended fund-

ing for Peru's military, Latin American observers wonder how long the U.S. government will maintain its sanctions against Peru. When President Bush lifted economic restrictions on Haiti in February—before any firm resolution against the putschists there—he sent strong signals to undemocratic forces throughout the hemisphere. In February, middle-ranking officers launched a bloody rebellion in Venezuela. The power play of Fujimori could prove to be the precursor to a wave of similar anti-democratic actions in South America.

Demagoguery: The prospects for democracy in Latin America have been hobbled, to a large extent, by its elected leaders, who have reneged on the wild populist campaign promises that brought them into office.

In Brazil, President Fernando Collor de Mello has lost almost all popular support just two years after being elected. Without any political party apparatus to sustain him, Collor's conservative fiscal program has floundered. Recently, rumors have surfaced about the possibility that a parliamentary government will be created, stripping Collor of his authority and installing a prime minister in his place. Others say the Brazilian military is awaiting the moment to pounce on the already wounded president.

Speculation in Argentina has repeatedly focused on the possibility that Peronist President Carlos Menem was preparing to do exactly what Fujimori did in Peru: dissolve an opposition Congress. So far, Menem has pursued less dramatic measures—he stacked the Supreme Court by increasing the number of judges, and when Congress gives him trouble he merely signs bills into law, employing emergency powers legislators gave him in 1989 to deal with hyperinflation. Menem's constant meddling with governmental powers and rampant corruption within his administration are starting to wear down the patience of the Argentine people. Although Menem was strong in his condemnation of Fujimori, one had the sense that he felt more envy than ire.

In Uruguay, President Luis Lacalle has seen his position weakened by the disintegration of a power-sharing deal between Uruguay's two traditional major parties—Lacalle's Blancos and the Colorado Party.

Continued on following page

Fujimori (and friends) settle old scores

On Sunday, April 5, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori announced in a nationwide TV speech that he was abolishing the national Congress and the entire judiciary system. During and after the speech, army troops moved into strategic positions in various parts of the country, especially in the capital city of Lima. During that night and the morning that followed, the military arrested numerous opposition politicians, journalists and leaders of unions and civic organizations.

One of the journalists detained was Gustavo Gorriti, the Lima correspondent for the Spanish daily *El Pais*. Gorriti recounted the story of his detention in the April 9 issue of *El Pais*:

"It was about 4 in the morning on Monday, and I was preparing to write a piece on the coup of Fujimori and the end of democracy in Peru, when I heard the doorbell. I knew that various arrests had occurred during the televised speech to the nation by Fujimori [on Sunday night]. I also knew that Fujimori's principal adviser, Bladimiro Montesinos, a man whose

modus operandi resembles [former Panamanian leader Manuel] Noriega or [long-time Peronist politician] Lopez Rega of Argentina, awaited the moment to even the score for a series of articles I published in 1983 [when he was an army officer] and which caused him to flee the country escaping from judicial authorities. Now in the first hours of a dictatorship, the revenge must have seemed possible to Montesinos. ... They took me out at gunpoint and, upon leaving my house, I saw the vehicle that waited for me: a Cherokee van—without license plates and with heavily tinted windows. The same ones donated by the CIA to the Peruvian Army's Intelligence Service. I realized that the situation was extremely serious."

The Peruvian government released Gorriti three days later, after Spain, the U.S. and various European and Latin American countries exerted diplomatic pressure.

As *In These Times* went to press, former Peruvian President Alan Garcia and other prominent figures were still being held by government forces.

—J.G.

Peru

Continued from page 9

The growing force of the leftist Broad Front has made Lacalle, in the words of one Uruguayan journalist, "increasingly prone to anti-democratic measures." Lacalle, referring to the Peruvian coup, said, "If the democracy shows that it is not effective, it [the actions of Fujimori] would have legitimacy." His words convulsed the country that invented the word *bordaberryzacion*.

Venezuela has had two bloody confrontations in the three years since President Carlos Andres Perez, a neoliberal convert, returned to power. In the latest conflagration, the February coup attempt by dissident military officers, Andres Perez barely survived the violence, which carried to the corridors just outside his office in the presidential palace. Venezuela has been bumping along since then, and rumors are flying about a

new uprising on Independence Day in late April. Andres Perez formed a commission to look into the country's problems and named former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to head the fact-finding group—a move unlikely to quell unrest among nationalistic army officers and their supporters in the poor barrios of Caracas.

The Bolivian government has spent most of the last month denying reports of problems within the military. But lapsed socialist President Jaime Paz Zamora, in place of condemning the coup in Peru, used it to warn his own Congress to get in line. Or else. That same Congress—which Paz Zamora today calls corrupt—just two years ago was responsible for selecting him as president even though he came in third at the ballot box. (In Bolivia, the constitution says the Congress shall choose the president if the voters do not give a clear majority.)

Fujimori, various members of Peru's eco-

nomie elite and even some of the people in Lima's streets are claiming the coup was necessitated by deep-seated corruption within Peru's legislative and judicial branches. High-level corruption has been a major problem in the fledgling democracies of South America. But corruption has always been worse under military regimes. If anything, corruption has been exposed more effectively under democratic rule.

Banking on disaster: Though Fujimori has used internal pressures as an excuse for the coup, severe pressures imposed from outside Peru—particularly from international banks—have been perhaps the most important factor in the country's crisis. Foreign lenders have destabilized countries throughout South America. Debt payments on loans given to corrupt military governments have created huge impediments to economic growth for the new democracies.

To ensure that countries meet their debt

obligations, international lending agencies continue to press their plans for *ajuste*, or adjustment, the economic belt-tightening measures that invariably compromise the poor and working-class sectors of Latin American societies—the overwhelming majority of the people.

Perhaps the best example of the perverse effect of the *ajuste* is in Venezuela, where the World Bank touts the country's economic growth rate of 9.5 percent. But this high growth is based primarily on a fortuitous increase in oil revenues. And even this sudden glut of petrodollars—unevenly distributed, thanks to International Monetary Fund policies—has created resentment among the poor, who are now openly siding with the military putschists against the country's ostensibly democratic government.

Of course, many bankers also express sympathy for military solutions in Latin America. "At times a benevolent dictator can be more desirable, because to attract investments, sacrifices and tough decisions are needed," said a banker with Morgan Stanley at this month's assembly of the Inter-American Development Bank in the Dominican Republic. "It is intellectually infantile to believe in the automatic connection between democracy and economic growth. Democracy, especially when it needs a coalition government, can mistake its focus, be inefficient and show incapacity to make decisions."

An Argentine banker at the same forum said, "These are not simple economic theories. There are banks that are betting on a coup in certain countries, above all in Brazil, because there are huge amounts of money in play."

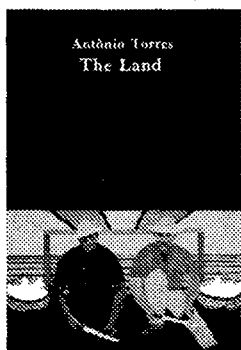
By implementing the *ajuste*, the international bankers have cultivated their backyard garden by ripping out democracy's budding flowers to allow the weeds more room to grow. The Peruvian *ajuste*—known as "Fujishock"—has created a sense of hopelessness among Peruvians and has revitalized the Shining Path guerrillas.

Luis Pásara, a Peruvian political scientist living in Buenos Aires, says that Fujimori—despite relying heavily on the armed forces—still retains popular support. But there will soon come a time, according to Pásara, when public sentiment will turn against him and he will be "absolutely dependent" on the military. Despite Fujimori's heavy-handed attempts to restore order, Pásara thinks Peru's army will remain unable to bring down the Shining Path insurgents. "And if this escalates into a stage of more repression," says Pásara, "the Shining Path will be the principal and only beneficiary."

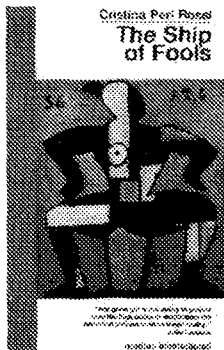
Joe Goldman is a reporter currently based in Buenos Aires who has lived in South America for the last nine years.

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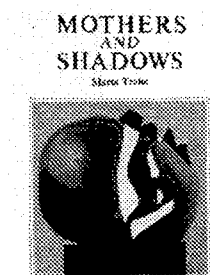
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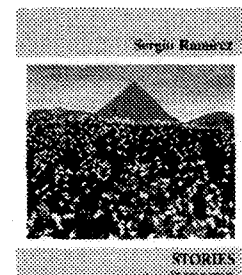
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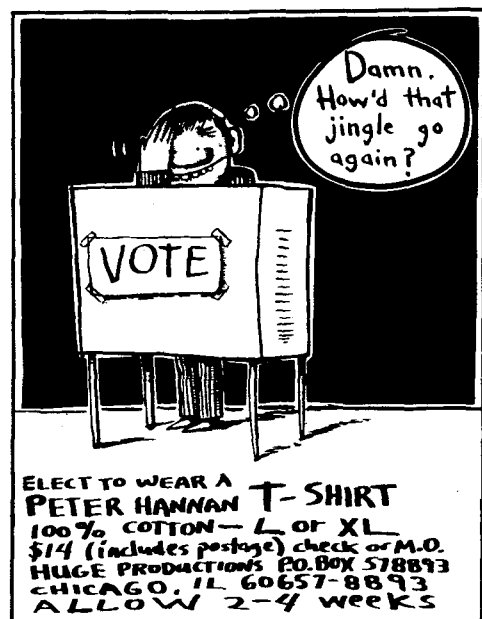
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By Jim Wurst

UNITED NATIONS

DUE LARGELY TO THE HERCULEAN efforts of the U.S., when the governments of the world meet in Rio de Janeiro in June at the largest environmental meeting in history, the documents the leaders will sign will signify almost nothing.

Delegates to the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)—the so-called Earth Summit—concluded their final five weeks of preparatory meetings in New York at the beginning of April. Their grand purpose was to lay the groundwork for a global system of agreements to save the environment while promoting “sustainable” development, designed to lift the poor out of poverty while simultaneously ensuring the integrity of the environment.

The meetings focused on four key issues: Agenda 21, a massive plan for saving the environment and promoting sustainable development into the 21st century; financing these programs; the Rio Declaration, a set of principles meant to be an easily-understood statement of nations’ intent to pursue the goals of UNCED; and the institutional arrangements to follow-up UNCED.

Agenda 21 contains approximately 115 program areas on issues including protection of the atmosphere, oceans, fresh water, wildlife and forests; on plans to deal with toxic chemicals, solid wastes, desertification and the transfer of technology for development; on the role of women, youth, science, indigenous groups, businesses and governments. More than 1,000 representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—grass-roots organizers, scientists and other experts—lobbied hard to keep governments true to the goals they claimed to embrace.

The new divide: In simplest terms, the debate broke down into a North-South divide with the developed North more concerned with environmental protection, and the developing South wanting to ensure that avenues to development remained open to them. In practical terms, this meant the South wanted the North to accept responsibility for its over-consuming, polluting practices. Lacking this, the South feared it would be asked to take on a disproportionate share of the burden for cleaning up the environment (by saving rain forests or cutting back on fossil fuel use, for example).

In other words, the North would not give up its “right” to consume and the South would not give up its “right” to develop, so any serious effort to save the environment had to overcome this double roadblock.

The U.S. position was simple: make no commitments beyond what is already required by U.S. law and agree to nothing that will cost money. This position was illustrated by the “Ten Commandments,” one delegate’s satirical take on a verbal briefing by the U.S. government. It was a list of 10 “thou shalt nots” that summarized the negative goals of the U.S.: do not agree to any new institutions, do not accept liability for environmental damage, do not share benefits of technology, etc.

One of the U.S. government’s favorite tactics was to object to language, and even whole sections, in Agenda 21 on the grounds that the topics—ozone depletion, for example—were under discussion in other forums. The unsaid but obvious problem is that the U.S. is also obstructing those negotiations.

While the goal of these preparatory meetings was to produce consensus documents in all areas, the key failure was the total lack of agreement on financing Agenda 21. The South wanted a commitment for “new and additional



Thomas Billings

Planning Earth Summit: little give, too much take

resources” to finance Agenda 21’s programs. The U.S. and, to a lesser extent, the other major donor countries opposed committing new funds to clean up the environment or aid in development. UNCED Secretary-General Maurice Strong estimates Agenda 21 would cost \$125 billion per year—\$70 billion above what is now spent by governments on their own or through international agencies.

The North’s preferred funding vehicles are the World Bank and its green offshoot, the

This way, the rain forests could be preserved as a “world heritage” (and, not so incidentally, also serve to suck up the greenhouse gases the North creates), without any restrictions on the North’s logging or reductions in their production of greenhouse gases.

The South objected vigorously, for both the best and worst reasons. For developing countries this was another attempt to impose the burden of saving the environment on them, charging the idea is “based on colonial rules and regulations.” The obvious question was: Why should your forests be yours but our forests are everyone’s? The idea of a moratorium on logging in *all* old-growth forests did not get very far. On the other hand, the South clearly wants the same right to decimate its forests as the North is exercising.

This so-called “right to development” was another sticking point. One of the South’s key demands, it is reflected in the Rio Declaration: “The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.” This “right” was attacked from both sides. The U.S. complained this idea implied a legal right that does not exist in international law. Southern NGOs charged this was the South’s desire to engage in the same developmental practices as the North.

The South also failed to shine when the debate turned to indigenous peoples. Dismissing northern concerns for these people as “Western romanticism,” some southern countries worked hard to minimize the special role they have in the global culture. About 60 such romantic figures attended UNCED and came away disappointed. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, from Luzon island in the Philippines, said the indigenous representatives had three complaints with the wording of Agenda 21: the term “traditional territories” was replaced with “lands”; “indigenous peoples” was replaced with “indigenous people”; and the reference to colonialism

alienating indigenous peoples from the land was deleted. These semantic changes, she said, obscured the fact that “we are distinct and indigenous peoples with our inalienable rights to self-determination and to our ancestral territories.”

To understand how far from reality the Washington ideologues worked, it is useful to look at two dogs that did not bark at UNCED: the worldwide military and multinational corporations. The crucial role these two global monsters play in destroying the environment and subverting development are obvious, but they are invisible in Agenda 21. The U.S. fought every attempt to have militarism mentioned, much less held accountable, in all programs. The U.S. fought the inclusion of issues such as military-generated toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes, and using the peace dividend for environmental and developmental aid. (A committee of parliamentarians from 20 nations said a 3 percent reduction in military spending would save \$1.3 trillion in the North and \$300 billion in the South this decade.) The text on radioactive waste does not even acknowledge the existence of military-created nuclear waste. One sentence says governments should “take urgent measures” to combat environmental and developmental degradation in developing countries caused by such afflictions as desertification, toxic waste, drought and war. The U.S. blocked agreement on including that last word.

The only thing to survive is one watered down principle in the Rio Declaration that says, “Warfare is inherently destructive of sustainable development. States shall therefore respect international law providing protection for the environment in times of armed conflict and cooperate in its further development, as necessary.”

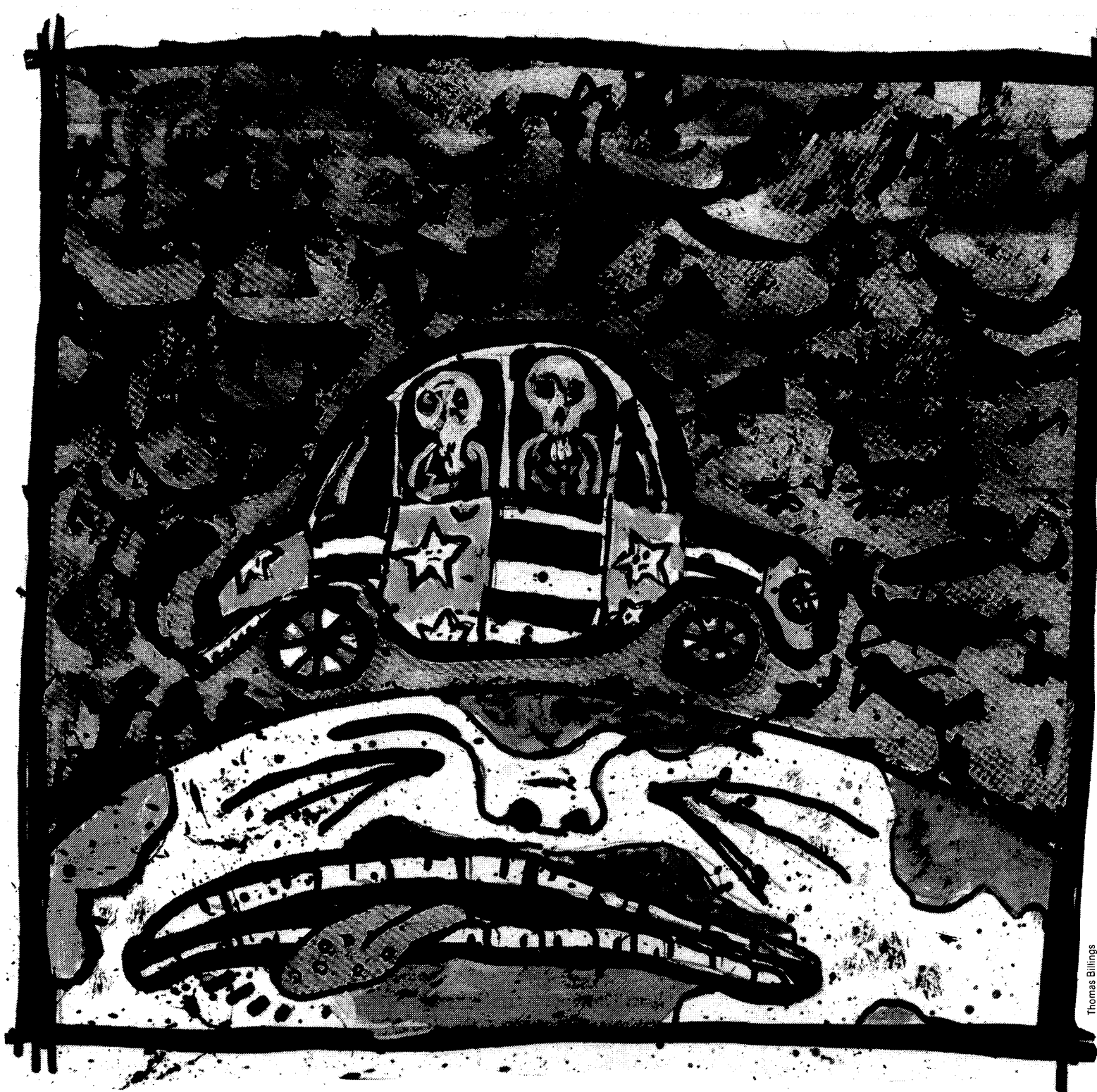
Multinationals, however (transnational corporations—TNCs, in U.N. jargon), do appear in Agenda 21. There is a section entitled “Strengthening the Role of Business and Industry,” which lauds “enlightened leaders of enterprises” who are implementing “responsible care” programs and “voluntary initiatives ... to ensure their activities have minimal impacts on human health and the environment.” After all references to industry’s role creating hazardous wastes were deleted from Agenda 21, one Caribbean delegate complained, “One of the major weaknesses was the fact that there was no specific reference to TNCs. ... This creates a major loophole and works to the disadvantage of the developing countries.”

This attitude fits in nicely with overall chummy relationships between TNCs and UNCED. Strong, himself on the board of numerous TNCs, actively recruited corporate sponsors for the conference. Channeled through a non-profit fund in Washington, such enlightened corporations as Atlantic Richfield and British chemical giant ICI helped pay for some of the research papers upon which Agenda 21 is based. TNCs also killed a U.N. report calling for greater corporate responsibility in aiding development. The pro-corporate Business Council for Sustainable Development injected its own business-friendly paper before UNCED instead. It was this kind of bias that led to NGO charges that multinationals were “hijacking” UNCED.

Despite the emptiness of Agenda 21, the New York meetings and the upcoming Rio summit cannot be wholly discounted. First of all, it placed development and the environment high on the international agenda. Even if governments do not commit themselves

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Thomas Billings

More hot air

U.S. chokes up Earth Summit emissions talks

By William K. Burke

NEW YORK

AS TREATY NEGOTIATIONS PRECEDING THE June Earth Summit enter their final phase, it has become evident that the Bush administration is not likely to change its policy of promoting gas-guzzlers over global cooperation. That policy will likely ensure that this landmark gathering of heads of state and environmental ministers in Rio de Janeiro is more spectacle than history.

Environmentalists have hoped for two years that the upcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio, usually called the Earth Summit, would change dramatically how the world's governments and people relate to their natural environment. Three treaties—or "conventions," in U.N. parlance—were originally planned. The forestry and climate change conventions would combine to preserve rain forests and head off the threat of global warming. A biodiversity treaty would attempt to halt mass extinctions of animal and plant species due to unsustainable de-

velopment practices. While observers seem confident a biodiversity treaty will be signed, the imminent failure of the interlinked forestry and climate conventions threatens to turn the Rio gathering into little more than

The U.S. remains committed to a "comprehensive" approach that would allow Americans to fix leaks in natural gas pipelines while continuing to drive low-mileage cars into the next century.

an eco-photo opportunity for candidate George Bush.

If Bush goes to Rio, that is. "We'll see what happens. It's not easy to not go [to the Earth Summit] or to go. You just have to sort these things out. I think anyone knows it's an election year," Bush said in impromptu comments in late March.

At issue are "targets and timetables." These are promises to reduce, by specific dates, the volume of the greenhouse gases responsible for the threat of global warming that the U.S. pours into the atmosphere. The most threatening greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide (CO₂), emitted in vast amounts by cars and coal-fired power plants. The Bush administration argues that reducing or even freezing CO₂ emission rates in the U.S.—for example, by instituting strict mileage standards for cars and encouraging energy efficiency—will harm the U.S. economy. "My concern is twofold, to do what's right for the environment and, two, to be sure we don't throw a lot of people out of work," Bush said.

Passing the gas: "[Bush's comments] amount to almost a threat not to attend [the

Rio meeting] if the United States doesn't get its preferred formulation on climate," said Richard Mott, treaties officer with the World Wildlife Fund.

This belief that reforming the U.S. economy to prevent global warming will mean the loss of U.S. jobs has guided U.S. policy since the start of the Earth Summit negotiations. Instead of agreeing to curb CO₂ output, the U.S. has pushed for a forestry convention committing Third World nations to preserve rain forests, which are believed to absorb large amounts of excess CO₂ emissions. This angered Third World representatives.

"If the U.S., the major polluting country in the world, the largest emitter of CO₂, refuses to even discuss targets and timetables, why should the [Third World] talk about forestry?" asked Barbara Pyle, Cable News Network vice president for environmental affairs, who has attended the presummit conferences. A group of developing nations, led by Malaysia, blocked the forestry convention during early treaty negotiations last year. They argued that the industrial countries wanted to tie up one of the developing world's primary cash crops to avoid reforming their own unsustainable lifestyles. Since the failure of the forestry convention, such selfish logic has ruled the pre-summit negotiations.

But not all industrialized nations are refusing to make reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. In October 1990, the European Community committed to stabilizing emissions of greenhouse gases at 1990 levels by the year 2000. Under the European plan, wealthier nations, primarily Germany, Holland and Denmark, will reduce their emissions, while relatively underdeveloped European nations, like Greece and Spain, will be allowed modest increases in CO₂ emissions.

Uncertain science, ineffective diplomacy: Last year, under pressure from the European Community, the Bush administration announced a "comprehensive" plan to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions. The comprehensive label meant the U.S. would take credit for overall reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from various sources including methane from natural gas leaks, agriculture and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), the industrial gases responsible for the thinning of the ozone layer.

In fact, the Bush administration's comprehensive plan sought to take double credit for complying with the Montreal Protocol, an international agreement to phase out CFCs. The White House proposed that the U.S. be allowed to increase CO₂ emissions 15 percent by the year 2000 and balance that increase against a CFC phaseout. Overall, the CFC phaseout accounted for about 80 percent of the planned U.S. reduction in greenhouse emissions.

This approach turned out to be based on uncertain science and ineffective diplomacy. Since the U.S. already produces about as large a volume of CO₂ emissions as the entire European Community, or around 23 percent of the world's total, Bush's plan would have virtually wiped out the net gain to the atmosphere from Europe's plan to stabilize emissions.

Also, atmospheric scientists have recently discovered that depletion of the ozone layer, which is proceeding at about twice the rate previously predicted, seems to have a cooling effect on the atmosphere that may partially mask the effects of other greenhouse gases. However, no one is rejoicing that the loss of the ozone layer will save us from global warming. Rather, scientists think the effect may explain some of the variation between computer models of expected global

warming and the actual warming observed so far. "It's pretty hard for the administration to go around taking credit for CFC reductions when the science has gotten more uncertain," said Alden Meyer of the Union of Concerned Scientists.

The European Community managed to make sure that all references to reducing greenhouse gas emissions at the Earth Summit will specifically prohibit any country from substituting CFC phaseout under the Montreal Protocol for reducing emissions of other greenhouse gases. But the U.S. remains committed to a comprehensive approach that would allow Americans to fix leaks in natural gas pipelines while continuing to drive low-mileage cars into the next century.

Another U.S. gambit to avoid greenhouse gas reduction targets and timetables failed last fall. This was the so-called "pledge and review" proposal. Pledge and review was reportedly promoted by MITI, Japan's trade ministry, to ease pressure on the U.S. to commit to reducing CO₂ emissions. (See *In These Times*, Sept. 4.) Essentially, pledge and review would have allowed countries to first pledge to reduce emissions then periodically review its pledges in light of changing economic situations. This no-commitment commitment reportedly appealed to the White House desire to avoid strict CO₂ reduction timetables but doomed the notion in negotiations. At the September climate negotiating meeting in Nairobi, pledge and review was abandoned after the European representatives took to calling the vague pledge and review concepts "the twin ghosts."

Smoke and mirrors: The current administration strategy to avoid reducing U.S. CO₂ emissions is the notion of "joint implementation." Under joint implementation countries would band together to reduce their net emissions. The U.S. has been quick to note that the Europeans are doing a form of joint implementation, with slightly higher emissions in Spain and Greece traded for deep cuts in Germany and Holland.

But the U.S. vision of joint implementation is much different. Mott said the U.S. sees joint implementation as allowing American car makers to roll out another generation of gas-guzzlers while contracting to plant plantations of fast-growing trees in other countries, more than likely on the sites of former Central American rain forests. In theory, the trees' appetite for CO₂ would balance the American public's presumed appetite for oil consumption. In practice, such a plan would be ecologically destructive in virtually every detail.

"The U.S. is not talking about reducing its emissions 20 to 30 percent like the Germans are so that China can build some power plants or 40 Romanians sitting around a 15-watt light bulb can get central heating. They are saying we will keep consumption down in the poorest countries so we can continue our profligate ways," Mott said.

The irony here is that the Bush administration's efforts to avoid long-term change in the structure of the U.S. energy industry may be setting the U.S. up for another drubbing in the world marketplace. "The political basis [the European Community] is operating from is that fossil fuels [coal and oil] are not the way of the future, that in the next century they are going to need to move toward alternative fuel regimes and increased energy-efficiency levels," Mott added.

Germany is especially eager to profit from this new energy future. Its economic plan treats CO₂ emission reduction targets as an engine that will drive the next phase of the

country's economic growth. "The Germans are confident they will get a payback on [greenhouse emission reductions] in terms of reduced energy and fuel costs. The remaining balance they see as making an investment in the technologies they will be developing and exporting in the next century," said Meyer.

The U.S. has the largest potential of any nation in the world to profit from an energy strategy of decreasing demand and developing renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. Energy expert Amory Lovins estimates that the U.S. wastes \$300 billion each year on energy because of inefficient home appliances and other wasteful practices. But the Bush administration seems determined not to bring home an energy dividend at the expense of oil-company profits and the incomes of the Mideast oil potentates that U.S. soldiers fought to protect. The current proposed U.S. energy strategy does include some tightened appliance standards as well as building codes that will reduce CO₂ emissions, but Meyer said these mea-

sures were forced on the administration by Congress.

Environmentalists fear that the desire to sign a climate convention, even a weakened version that will have to be strengthened through future negotiations on details and implementation, will cause the European nations to give in to Bush's refusal to consider targets and timetables. "If the U.S. stands firm on its 'no binding commitments' position, we are definitely looking at the possibility of a fig-leaf treaty in Rio," said Meyer.

No revolution: The last round of climate treaty negotiations begins in May in New York City. It seems almost inevitable that any treaty that emerges will be severely weakened by the Bush administration's stance. This stance also impeded the separate pre-summit negotiations on an Earth Charter and Agenda 21 (see accompanying story), two documents intended to produce a philosophical revolution on a wide range of environmental issues.

"By blocking so strongly in key areas, the U.S. managed to stagnate the possibility of

any true vision or brilliant ideas emerging," lamented Pyle. "I have tremendous respect and admiration for the U.S. delegation; however, they operated under a very narrow set of briefs. ... The mandate was to go slow, stonewall, get this thing over with while giving up as little as possible. It's not to be blamed on these people as individuals. It's the policy of our administration."

That policy turned the various pre-summit negotiations into an elaborate game in which nations scurried to protect their self-interests. The last move is now up to Bush as he decides whether or not to attend the Earth Summit. "[Bush's indecision] puts the Brazilians and Europeans in the position of having to compromise on what should be a matter of principle; that the climate situation is serious, that the U.S. in particular and industrial countries in general ought to commit to freeze CO₂ emissions," said Mott. "That shouldn't be a political bargaining chip to get Bush to come to Rio." □

William K. Burke writes regularly for *In These Times* on environmental issues.

Small talk: EPA Administrator William Reilly on Earth Summit

William Reilly may be too young, too dapper, too erudite for the Bush administration. But the 53-year-old Environmental Protection Agency administrator seems to appeal to the patrician side of the president, looking part terrier with his big amused eyebrows and polite manner while such pit bulls as John Sununu and Richard Darman have gnawed on environmentalism like a bone. "Americans did not fight and win the wars of the 20th century to make the world safe for green vegetables," Darman once said.

On Saturday, March 14, Reilly addressed the United Nations delegates at the Earth Summit Preparation Committee (PrepCom) with nothing so memorable in mind.

He could have been the main event of the day, indeed, of the whole five weeks of meetings, since he was the highest-ranking official to visit from the world's biggest polluter. Everyone at the U.N. had been waiting for the U.S. government to quit treating the Earth Summit as an irritant to free-market capitalism and instead as an opportunity to bring environmentalism into the heart of America's international affairs. They were also waiting to hear if President Bush would even bother to attend. But Reilly chose to let the occasion pass.

He divided his speech between the high rhetoric that makes the upcoming Earth Summit sound like the last great hope for humankind—and the meager politics of the U.S. that ensure nothing grand will come of it.

After listening to two young men with ostrich egg heads play some New Agey oboes and drums, he stepped to the podium. "I was struck, listening to the music that began these few moments, by a remark made to me a long time ago by a music history teacher—Maurice DuForg, who was a great organist—who said that he had consoled himself throughout the occupation of Paris with his music," Reilly said. "And he used to say of music: There is no other medium that invades the spirit, subverts the emotions and transforms the mood, whether we will it or not."

"Would that that were true of words," he added. "Would that that were true of my words. What a lot more fun many of us would have."

But Reilly only teased us with the implication that he was on our side. He quickly rejoined his employer. "Incidentally, I am fascinated by something I read in *ECO*, the NGO [non-governmental organization] newsletter, last night," he said, continuing his opening banter. "It's in the want ads, classified section, buy and sell. It says: 'Lonely hearts—major developed country feeling isolated, would like to make new friends. No commitments. Box G-7. Swingers. To join the party, dial 900-GEF. \$75 million per call.'" On the eve of PrepCom, the U.S. has pledged \$75 million in new aid, much of it to the Global Environmental Facility under the wing of the World Bank. On the opening day of PrepCom, organizer Maurice Strong had asked the industrial nations to commit \$125 billion a year eventually, \$70 billion more than their current foreign aid around the globe. Japan, according to popular rumor, plans to announce a \$10 billion to \$12 billion donation after PrepCom.

"I read this last evening," Reilly continued, "and I said to myself, 'Who can they possibly mean?' So I called up Gov. Sununu—and he knew. It's the Netherlands. I had thought it was Germany. What can I say? Leave it to the NGOs to push back this envelope. I've heard of shuttle diplomacy, but want-ad diplomacy, that's really new."

Perhaps Reilly wanted to diffuse the sore feelings so many delegates have toward the intransigent U.S. But his suave wit only drew attention to the uneasiness. At the end, he said, "Let me close by answering a question that I know is on everyone's mind. Will a certain U.S. official be going to Rio? I am now prepared to announce that I will be in Rio. Thank you." Not much applause thanked him back.

The heart of Reilly's speech wasn't so bad, just tiny compared to what the planet needs. He played it safe by talking about two practical U.S. accomplishments rather than the great unanswered issues of global warming or poverty.

"In the United States, Community Right to Know has become one of the most powerful tools for protecting the environment. The program establishes the public's basic right to information—a tool

far more powerful than its legislative authors had ever imagined or intended," he said, quite rightly. Passed in 1986 in the wake of the Bhopal disaster in India, this federal law requiring every major industrial plant to report its annual toxic emissions to the EPA has been a boon to grassroots groups, the press and the companies themselves.

"The chief executive officer of one major chemical company remarked to me a couple of years ago that, until he saw his company's inventory of annual releases of toxics for the year before, he had no idea how much high-value product was being wasted, going up the stacks and out the pipes. He promptly committed his company to a 90 percent reduction over the following four years in these releases," Reilly told us, adding that members of the Chemical Manufacturers Association had cut their toxic emissions by 40 percent since 1986.

The U.S. would like to see Community Right to Know spread across the world, probably an excellent idea.

Reilly then plugged the EPA's Green Lights program, which in one year "has enlisted the commitments of now six states and 400 corporations in changing their lighting." Compact fluorescent light bulbs, which use one-seventh of the electricity and last 10 times as long as incandescent bulbs, have become the perfect valentine from the EPA to industry. He said that 2 billion square feet of office space are now in the program, "more than all of the leasable commercial space in the metropolitan areas of New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Dallas" and "the equivalent of removing 1.6 million cars from the road."

Near the end, a young, pony-tailed protester held up a sign: "Blah, blah, blah" and promptly got hustled out of the room by the guards. Community Right to Know and Green Lights are not blah, blah, blah, but they are meager offerings from a country that still produces almost one-fourth of the carbon dioxide in the world. Reilly's words didn't move anyone like music because he didn't really try. He's a compromised man in a job that needs a firebrand.

—Will Nixon

EDITORIAL

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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WATERS

GNU



The great Chicago flood: A metaphor for America

An ingenious turn-of-the-century technology, inadequately maintained in recent years, brought the center of Chicago to a soggy standstill last week. When a section of a 40-mile network of tunnels that passed under the Chicago River collapsed, at least 250 million gallons of water flooded into basements throughout the Loop.

Electricity for the area was quickly cut off. Subways stopped running. Buildings were evacuated as lights went out and elevators stopped functioning. The world's tallest building—the Sears Tower—the world's two largest commodities exchanges, the state office building, Marshall Field's department store, scores of hotels and a thousand restaurants all ceased operations and sent their employees home. In the immediate hours following the shutdown, the Loop had the frenzied appearance of a city being evacuated because of a nuclear disaster. Hours later, it looked like shot of San Francisco from *On the Beach*, the movie about atomic war in which only Australians had not yet perished.

Built almost a century ago, the tunnel system was used until after World War II to deliver coal and freight to the furnaces and loading docks of businesses throughout downtown Chicago. In recent years, sections of the tunnels have been used for utility and TV cables. Last January 14, Chicago Cable TV employees working in the tunnel discovered and videotaped a collapsed wall and leak where the tunnel passed under the river. They tried to notify city officials, but couldn't locate the bureaucrat they usually dealt with because of a recent reorganization of city offices.

In late February they ran into the city worker they knew near the

tunnel and urged him to inspect the site. On March 2, according to a cable company official, they ran into him again and asked about the situation. "Yeah, we've seen it," the city man said. But nothing was done until April 1, when the city's chief bridge engineer warned that the city faced the "danger of flooding out the entire freight tunnel system." Then \$10,000 was authorized for repairs and the work was put out for bids but not started.

Failure to act promptly and spend a few thousand dollars has already cost the city and downtown businesses hundreds of millions of dollars, and may well end up costing billions when all the lawsuits are settled.

In part this is a story about bureaucratic and unresponsive government. And in part it is a metaphor for the condition of the nation's infrastructure and the shortsightedness of government's neglect of its physical and human resources. Failure to inspect and repair the tunnel system at a small discretionary cost will end up costing hundreds of millions in mandatory spending and unavoidable losses, just as failure to regulate the savings and loan industry has ended up costing American taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars.

Other examples abound. Discretionary money is not spent on preventive health care and pollution control and that ends up costing billions in unavoidable expenses for treatment. Money is not spent on public education or to provide decent affordable housing and that ends up costing billions for law enforcement and jails.

In Chicago, the failure to act decisively is being explained by some as a result of following procedures dictated by a mayor who demands cost accountability. But, of course, there is a double standard here. When it comes to servicing the people of the city, penny pinching is in order. But when it comes to projects like new sport stadiums or a third airport, hundreds of millions of dollars can be given in contracts to the mayor's financial backers.

This, too, is a metaphor for our federal government.

The Chicago River as environmental disaster

As the water swirled in a giant whirlpool out of the Chicago River and into the bowels of the city, it pulled with it the remnants of another cover-up—PCBs and various other toxins that had settled on the river bottom after decades of corporate dumping into the public domain. And when the water flooded into subbasements and sub-sub-basements throughout the central city, it picked up other toxic wastes

stored there. This water is now being pumped into the city's deep tunnel sewer. From there it will go to a processing plant and then be dumped into the Des Plaines River, which flows into the Illinois River, which flows into the Mississippi River—from which people all the way down to New Orleans get their drinking water.

Once again, ordinary citizens will get sick, and some will die, because of our corporate elite's greater concern for profit than for the public interest.

It's too late to do much about this part of Chicago's unforeseen disaster. But there is a clear lesson here, one that in this election year should be used to measure the worth of candidates for Congress and for president.

LETTERS

Deserving

DAVID MOBERG'S ARTICLE ON THE DEMOCRATS (*ITT*, March 25) treats Jerry Brown almost as an afterthought. The article also contains this passage: "Brown's past record is mixed (a fine labor and environmental record, disastrous endorsement of California's Proposition 13 tax limitation). His persona is wild, quirky and abrasive, to be charitable. He's a convenient vehicle of protest, but it's hard to take him seriously as a candidate."

Whoa. A fine labor and environmental record? Are those qualities worth only a parenthetical expression? Are they not, if you'll excuse the pun, of primary importance? What other candidate who can be taken seriously can boast the same? And if they can't, then exactly on what criteria is their claim to seriousness based? Shouldn't a newspaper with *ITT*'s aspirations raise these questions and give Brown's real virtues their due?

It's one thing to question whether Brown will be taken seriously, given the prevailing ultraconservatism of the U.S. It's quite another to question whether he *deserves* to be taken seriously. He does, without question, which is why he won here in Connecticut. He has very good points. He is not just an anti-Clinton.

ITT could devote a few less column inches to Pat Buchanan and Paul Tsongas and give its readers some alternative opinion—President Bush, President Clinton or President Brown? Give me Brown, any day.

Michael Kelley
Meriden, Conn.

Zunes

I WAS PLEASED TO SEE THE RECENT "IN PERSON" biography of Stephen Zunes and his Institute for a New Middle East Policy (INMEP) (*ITT*, March 11). However, it missed perhaps the most important aspect of Professor Zunes' work: his ability to be a forceful proponent of Palestinian rights while being a committed ally to Jews.

Zunes is the only gentile I have met who is neither wishy-washy when it comes to the nature of Israeli policies nor succumbs to unaware anti-Semitism. His workshops for activists show non-Jews the insidious nature of anti-Semitism, why even we progressive Jews sometimes get defensive around Israel, how Israeli security and Palestinian rights are mutually dependent rather than mutually exclusive, and how U.S. support of the Shamir government is destroying Israel. He empowers people to get involved in Middle East peace issues in ways that bring people together instead of tearing them apart.

Roy Miller
Seattle

Karman strikes back

THE IRATE LETTERS BLASTING MY CHARACTERIZATION of Cockburn as a Stalinist brought charges of redbaiting, which, given the tide of history, is like being accused of Whig-baiting. There's also an imputation of anti-Semitism because I noted, in passing, the

retirement of Stalinist intellectuals of various stripes either to sunny islands or to Zionism. How times have changed (not). Back in 1977, I wrote in *In These Times* that many CPers "secretly support Israel, think Fidel is too flashy and admire Mo Udall" and was merely called a redbaiter.

Dan Lazare says he's been reading Cockburn for years and that all he's noticed is "Cockburn's forte" of "defending the Soviets from a critical left-wing perspective." I'll buy that. I imagine typical examples of this might be Cockburn's recent efforts to debate down the number of Stalin's victims and his description of the Brehznev era as the "golden age of the Soviet working class." Golden agers, of course, are retired folk facing death.

But my definition of Stalinism is not just advocacy, apologia or nostalgia for the stupid, brutal and self-destroyed Soviet model. It also has a generic dimension that includes a habit of bending fact to theory, abrasiveness in dealing with differences of opinion and a propensity to make anomalous alliances with one's putative enemies. From years of reading Cockburn, I decided that Stalinist was the most accurate and telling pejorative to use.

Cockburn's bluff declaration in the *Nation* (March 6) that Lee Oswald did it, Oliver Stone lied about it and that any other position is "false history and bad politics" seems to me a splendid example of generic Stalinism. But this is just polemics.

More serious is Cockburn's anti-journalistic and manipulative recent *Nation* interview with Wesley J. Liebler. It begins with this question:

AC: "What about the speed at which Oswald would have had to fire his Mannlicher-Carcano? Critics of the Warren Commission say Oswald could never have loosed off the shots in so short a time."

Those 34 words are a perfect example of the "do you still beat your wife" ploy. They neither contain nor seek truth. They insult the evidence and those who gave or marshaled it, often at the cost of their lives and careers. They make tracks away from the great majority of people around the world who can't swallow the official pap, not because they are politically mobilized by polemicists or conned by movie makers, but simply because it won't go down.

The aim of my article was to explain why Americans don't believe the Warren Commission and to question why Alexander Cockburn suddenly does, particularly since the Commission is in the terminal stages of the same demise by dishonesty and self-delusion that did in the USSR.

Pete Karman
Rockfall, Conn.

Connections

IN THE FEB. 19 IN *THESE TIMES*, JOEL BLEIFUSS starts off his column, "In 1946 Aldous Huxley revised the foreword of his 1931 novel *Brave New World* to fit the historical circumstances to the then new world order. '[T]here is no reason why the new totalitarianisms should resemble the old. Government by clubs and firing squads, by artificial famine, mass imprisonment and mass deportation is not merely inhuman: it is demonstrably inefficient, and in an age of advanced technology, inefficiency is a sin against the Holy Ghost. A really efficient totalitarian state would be one in which the all-powerful executive of political bosses and their army of managers control a population of slaves who do not have to be coerced, because they love their servitude. To make them love it is the task assigned, in present-day totalitarian states, to ministries of propaganda, newspaper editors and school teachers.'"

It has not been lost on many of us that the image of the U.S. postage stamp now in circulation is a picture of the globe in the shape of a heart. Underneath it is one word. "LOVE."

The front page of our local newspaper, *The Chronicle Journal* (March 11) is an interesting illustration of the kind and gentle totalitarianism we are now living under.

As usual, there is the front-page "happy picture." Eight students are seen walking down the steps of their school "Europe bound." The mayor, taking time off from his business in cutting back services to the city "unwantables," is seen beaming from the back of the picture. The students no doubt will arrive in Europe, stay in pleasant homes, see some historic sites, and be herded safely back again. They will return, no doubt, quite blind to the plight of the European "unwantables," who are undergoing a similar plight to the same "unwantables" in Canada.

Farther down the front page of our local newspaper is a headline, "Weekly report offers Solace on Ozone State." Environment Canada plans to launch a weekly information service to calm Canadians about the depletion of the ozone layer.

Note the words "solace" and "calm," i.e., the wolf tries to calm Little Red Riding Hood.

Crossing the page is an item that would make Huxley roll in his grave in laughter or perhaps tears.

The headline reads, "Clearing Remnants of War in Gulf Job for City Soldier. Some danger, but we try to minimize it."

A Thunder Bay soldier, being interviewed by a local reporter before he goes to Kuwait, says no Canadians have been seriously hurt during the long cleanup operation. However,

there have been casualties among British, U.S. and Kuwaiti troops. (It is not mentioned that dead Iraqi troops were buried by bulldozers, just like they buried the bodies in the concentration camps during World War II.)

The Thunder Bay soldier says he realizes that he is going to a Moslem country "that has no entertainment value." As second-in-command of his squadron, he has the duty of sending pictures and short stories from his troops to newspapers in their hometowns in Canada. His parents are a little concerned: This is the first time that he has served in a war-torn area.

Well, we all know if we are not completely under control that what happened in Iraq was the first exercise of the loving New World Order in destroying the civilian infrastructure of a Third World country with the new high-tech computer-controlled technology that is part of what was sold to us under President Reagan as defensive "Star Wars." We all at some level know that we have been denied pictures of the civilian dead in Iraq much like all North Americans were denied pictures of the people in Hiroshima when that new stage of warfare was born.

So why don't we make the direct links with the calming Little Red Riding Hood article on the ozone layer to the article about the Gulf job for city soldier?

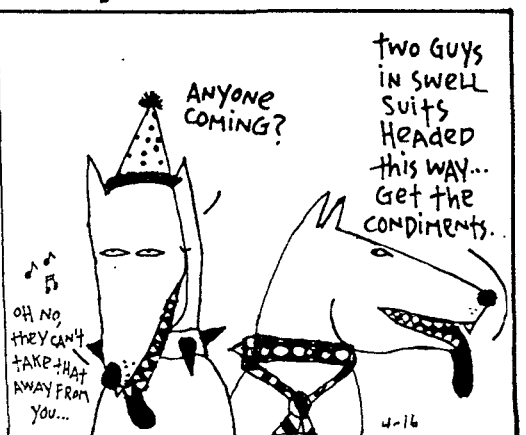
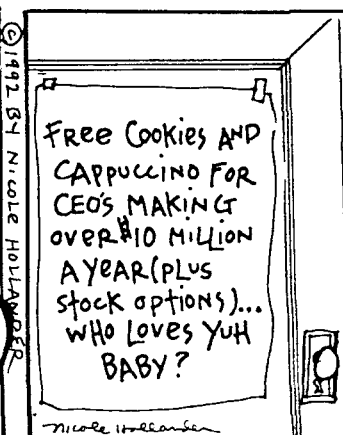
Rosalie Bertell, of the Canadian Institute for Public Health, doctor of biometrics and researcher of cancer and leukemia, told 1,500 women at the Miami International Women's Conference in November 1991 that much of our environmental degradation has happened since World War II. In that period of time, 70,000 to 100,000 new toxic chemicals to air, water and land have been introduced that have been military spin-offs, sold to the unsuspecting public because it cheapens the price of the military. We should not be surprised that all this is killing us, because that is what they were primarily designed to do.

The sacred cow of the military should have rolled over after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Huxley also wrote, "Great is truth, but still greater, from a practical point of view, is silence about truth. By simply not mentioning certain subjects, totalitarian propagandists have influenced opinion much more effectively than they could have done by the most eloquent denunciations."

Josie Wallenius
Thunder Bay, Ontario

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander

By Roberta Lynch

AS ONE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) whom David Moberg interviewed for his article on labor and the presidential primary, I found his summation of our position distilled almost to the point of distortion. I'd like to clarify my views (which, I should note, are not necessarily those of my union).

I begin from a proposition that America today is confronting a crisis of nearly mind-numbing magnitude. We are in the midst of an economic restructuring that is rapidly eroding the standard of living of millions of our citizens, at the same time that we are beset by social traumas that are corroding vast areas of public life. While the origins of both developments predated the Reagan-Bush reign, they have been frightfully intensified by the policies of these administrations.

We now have the opportunity to end that era and to elect a Democratic president. But to do so will surely require marshaling our forces and waging a battle of great ferocity. Organized labor should be central to that battle; instead, many labor leaders are squandering their influence on a protest candidate or sitting on the sidelines. Given the inadequacies of the Democratic candidates, such impulses are understandable. But, given the urgency of the moment, they are misguided.

If we are to defeat George Bush in November, we should unify around the most viable Democratic candidate and shape a campaign that has the potential to unify the Democratic base. That candidate is now clearly Bill Clinton. Granted, his viability is fragile due to his flawed persona and the media's thirst for sensation.

Even those who are Jerry Brown's ardent supporters do not argue that he can win the nomination. At most, they hope that he will be the battering ram—not for a new social order, as he vaguely implies, but for destroying Clinton's candidacy and making way for a brokered convention. That is a scenario with an enormous hole at its center—namely the distinct absence of any alternative candidate who could emerge from such a likely debacle. It is hard to imagine how reasonable people can convince themselves that it is worth going through such a self-destructive exercise to

Why the left should back Bill Clinton now

end up with Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-TX), the only candidate who is clearly lounging about in the wings.

Any Democrat? But should labor support a candidate simply because he is a Democrat who can win? I'm almost ready to answer that question with a simple, unqualified "yes," given how thoroughly the Republican decade has decimated the nation's social and economic fabric. But, while I would be the first to admit that I do not

While I do not know that electing a Democrat can reverse the trends of the past decade, I am 100 percent certain that re-election of George Bush will only foster them.

know that electing a Democratic president can reverse these trends, I am also 100 percent certain that the re-election of George Bush will only foster them. And I am equally certain that a Democratic presidency will significantly alter the terrain on which all the critical debates of the day take place—opening up political space for labor and the left.

Although there is clearly a case to be made for lending support to any Democratic front-runner, in the case at hand there are strong affirmative reasons to support Bill Clinton. Chief among these is the fact that Clinton's campaign has a surprisingly strong populist subtext. It took Mike Dukakis until the final weeks of the general election to understand that a presidential candidate cannot mobilize the potential Democratic base without a message that forthrightly takes the side of working people against the elite. Bill Clinton

began his campaign pledging to "put economic opportunity in the hands of ordinary people, not rich and powerful special interests." Since then, he has deepened this populism, denouncing exorbitantly high corporate salaries and golden parachutes while criticizing tax policies that reward American companies for moving jobs overseas.

Equally important, in my view, is what sociologist William Julius Wilson has called Bill Clinton's "remarkable biracial coalition." For the first time in recent memory, a white candidate is talking forthrightly about racial issues to both black and white audiences, not in the language of guilt or accusation, which alienates as many as it assuages, but in the language of opportunity and commonality.

On the night of his victory in the Illinois primary, when Bill Clinton could have talked of so many things, he went before the television cameras and spoke with passion of problems that the Republicans have so long tried to marginalize by making them seem unique to the African-American community and thence impossible or unnecessary to solve. And as he enumerated these problems—such as an 8-year-old girl being stabbed in a Chicago school—he said forcefully after each one: "That's not a racial problem, that's an American problem." (Compare this to the president we now have who can speak with passion of nothing but the splendor of a capital gains tax cut.)

I look at these key campaign elements—an economic populism that could help to restore working people to a central place in American politics and an appeal to common interests that could vitiate the racial divisions that have so polarized and paralyzed our nation—and I find it amazing that so many on the party's left can be so thoroughly indifferent to the value of such a campaign. These themes could establish a new direction in national politics and set a standard by which a President Clinton could be judged.

Up for grabs: I know, of course, that there are those who charge that Clinton's emphasis on such issues is no more than "part of the game," while his real allegiance is to his wealthy contributors. But there is little evidence that it coincides with reality. Rather, if you examine Clinton's record, his position papers, and his personal history, what seems far more likely is that, like so many politicians (indeed, so many Americans), the man is a hodgepodge of differing, even conflicting views. His commitment to greater worker empowerment may well be genuine; but so, very likely, is his conviction that business really "needs" work-rule changes. The fact is that Bill Clinton himself is contested terrain—and we make a large mistake if we cede the field to the neoliberals and Wall Street financiers.

Does the urgency of forging a credible campaign necessitate that we sweep our criticisms of Clinton under the carpet? Far from it. We should be consistently pressuring the candidate to change those positions with which we disagree, and we should not

feel compelled to make public peace with him on those where the disagreements cannot be resolved.

But there are a few further considerations. First, some of the problems with Clinton's (and so many others') lackluster support of labor can be laid at our own doorstep. We demand of a candidate that he/she agree with us on "right to work," "fast track" and "work rules," issues on which we have done woefully inadequate public education so that our concerns—in their stated form—resonate with only a small portion of the voting population, indeed, probably with only a minority of working people.

Second, in some instances, we are demanding allegiance from the candidate on issues about which we do not even agree among ourselves. Moberg takes a dig at AFSCME for supporting Clinton when he backs a "pay or play" version of national health reform rather than the "single payer" program we favor; Moberg fails to note, however, that much of the labor movement disagrees with us and has the same position as Bill Clinton. In the last few years, there have been three major national issues that have unified the labor movement: prohibition of striker replacements; establishment of mandatory family/medical leave; and the defeat of fast-track authority for the Mexican Free Trade Agreement. We have not won on any of them—due, primarily, to the opposition of the Republican administration. Clinton is already on record in support of outlawing replacement workers and of adopting a family leave law. He did not oppose "fast track" authority, but he has enumerated conditions that should be met before proceeding with any agreement—conditions consistent with much of organized labor's concerns. Thus, on the major political issues on which the labor movement is unified, Clinton is not so very far wide of the mark.

Third, Moberg rightly points out that Clinton doesn't seem to understand the importance of organized labor in any strategy for economic revival. He cites the candidate's remarkably obtuse comments regarding the Arlington, Texas, General Motors workers as evidence. No argument here. But I think it is worth noting that, rather than reiterating this point, as candidates are wont to do when they think they are onto something, Clinton swiftly abandoned it. In fact, within a few days, he had shifted his focus to an attack on the company for moving a Michigan plant overseas even after the union had agreed to work-rule changes. In other words, at least at the level of pronouncements, and very likely at the level of policy, the man is educable.

With all his flaws, both personal and political, Bill Clinton represents the best hope we have. And despite his reputation as a political insider, Clinton is essentially running an outsider campaign, one that offers the possibility of mobilizing working people of all races. In discussing the Illinois primary, in which Carol Moseley Braun scored an upset victory over the incumbent U.S. senator, an African-American voter who was interviewed about the election told the reporter: "I went out to vote just for her and Clinton. It's a vote for our own." If we in organized labor fail to recognize the potential power of that sentiment, we are missing an opportunity of historic import.

Roberta Lynch is director of public policy for Illinois AFSCME Council 31.

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By Jonathan McVity

MANY PEOPLE HAVE WONDERED WHY NO Democratic leader has tried to make renewable energy what John F. Kennedy made space: a prime focus for what Democrats call "leadership" and authoritarians call "the national will." Why do we hear so little about the chance for boundless, clean energy?

Here in Virginia in 1981, the state produced a study saying 44 percent of our public buildings could reduce energy cost burdens on taxpayers even if they were retrofitted with the relatively inefficient solar collectors of the day. During the 1990 elections, the 7th District Democratic candidate tried to follow through on this cost reduction. He was met with Republican radio smears using the phrase "federally funded solar energy"—that's all, just the phrase, no analysis. The Democrat owned a small solar business, but the tone of voice suggested far more than just self-dealing—it carried the oxymoronic weight of "Stalinist hip-pies."

Many Americans who can scarcely solve elementary quadratics or find Ecuador on a globe nonetheless feel entitled to regard renewable energy as unrealistic. Some contractors will tell you that in their experience solar houses do not work as advertised. They overheat, they overcool. They look as unfashionable as bellbottoms. When you boil this view down, you get nothing more than you get from "All cars are Model T Fords." People who try to build houses using vague rules of thumb drawn from completely different model houses at Los Alamos, or using no rules at all other than a fondness for glass doors, can hardly expect Los Alamos results. Objections like these are primarily fig leaves for deeper prejudices set free in Reagan-era euphoria.

Economics aside, the really subversive thing about the sun is that, even if you were a Very Important Person indeed, you couldn't buy it all for yourself or send an army to beat some sense into the sun-dwellers. More concretely, the sun can devalue honest work. People who have sweated many years for a nuclear or petrochemical or architectural degree, possibly putting themselves hundreds of thousands of dollars into debt, naturally want to feel that their cleverness is not wasted. They do not want to be reminded of energy guru Amory Lovins' observation that running million-degree reactors to heat hundred-degree showers is like "cutting butter with a chain saw." They do not want to hear that if you spend 1,000 hours a year working to pay for a car you drive 5,000 miles, you are getting about five miles per hour and might, therefore, be happier enjoying the view on foot. Nor do they want to hear that their building, or their local building code, is crude because it requires unnecessary combustion.

Joining the race: New coalitions form in times where the old ego alliances fray, where the warfare between unearned privilege and unearned poverty becomes increasingly naked. This was the story of the civil-rights coalition in Kennedy's day; perhaps it will yet prove to be the story of the renewable energy coalition in ours.

As the world population mushrooms, conflicts over ever-decreasing hydrocarbon reserves will likely increase proportionately. Other industrial countries have

Turning the nation's energy toward renewable resources

learned to get more mileage from their finite resources so they can afford not only a longer-term commercial perspective but also a more disinterested view of impending environmental crises.

In the next century, with intensifying ozone depletion, carbon dioxide accumulation and economic interdependence, the countries that have to buy dirty energy from others will not only be economic losers but also environmental pariahs. Every major industrial country will need new sources of clean energy if it does not want its entire economic base to be at the mercy of foreign suppliers and U.N. sanctions. The eco-sphere cannot sustain an entire world even at relatively modest New Zealand standards of energy consumption, let alone American standards.

Behold the energy race in which America finds itself, whether it likes it or not. The energy race is not toward the stars but away from the nightmare where billions of Chinese, Indians and Africans gridlock in gas-guzzlers on their own Ventura Highways, reminding us truthfully enough that in making lung cancer and immune disorders routine parts of growing up, they were just following our good example.

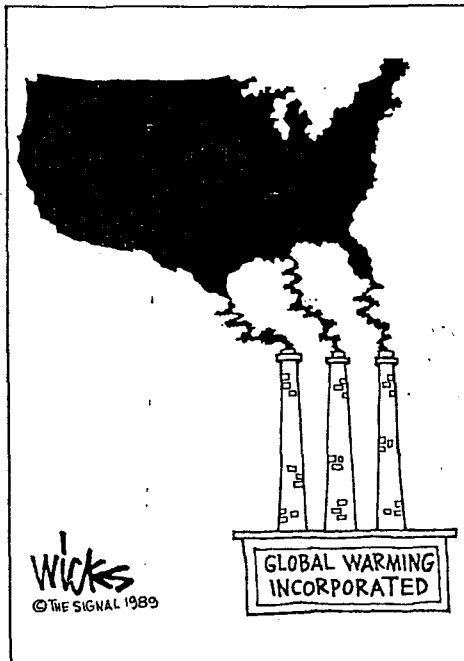
This threat stands Cold War thinking on its head, though it does suggest a possible Machiavellian harness for the xenophobia of certain voting blocs. George Kennan's fear was that others would envy our profligacy enough to attack us. Bang. Now we have the added fear that they will have no need to envy us. Whimper.

The energy race has its Sputniks, too, but few people are aware they have gone up. Our rivals' advantage in energy efficiency is not as dramatic as the power of a Soviet missile, even though it means that they earn more hard currency from any given gallon or therm. More insidiously, it is not in the financial interest of our oil, coal, nuclear or natural gas suppliers, or of the private propaganda ministries they directly or indirectly control, for our rivals' advanced research to attract too much popular attention in America—not while there is still money to be made on the old fuels.

Most Americans, for instance, hear about untapped Alaskan oil from broadcasters whose incomes would plummet without a steady flow of advertising from businesses whose profits depend on an infrastructure that heavily subsidizes the automobile. Thus in the public mind, the Alaskan oil dispute boils down to a conflict between wishful environmentalists and hard-headed realists. Which do we need more, pretty vistas or every drop of oil we can get?

False premise: Most Americans would be surprised to learn that this "debate" is a red herring. Right next door to Alaska, and despite the oil riches of Alberta, the Canadians have been convinced for five years that their long-term viability hinges on becoming leading suppliers of hydrogen, which ounce for ounce contains more energy than gasoline. Burning hydrogen is nearly pollution-free, releasing only water vapor and nitrogen traces. One way to get

it is by passing electric current through water. You get not only hydrogen but also oxygen for industry and medicine. The Canadians are going to use their huge hydroelectric resources to get the current. The Germans, by contrast, are testing a strategy more natural to North America: generating the current with solar concentrators and passing the hydrogen gas through continental pipelines.



America has never entirely given up spending money on such projects; indeed, George Bush has trivially increased renewable-energy budgets since Reagan capriciously slashed them. But administration investment in renewables research and development is pathetic by comparison with the endless billions hydrocarbon partisans are milking from the taxpayers in the form of business-expense deductions, military subsidies, giveaway mineral leases on federal land, airline subsidies, trucking subsidies, automobile subsidies, highway subsidies and capital-gains subsidies.

Even skeptical people often lack a gut feeling for the absurdity of conventional economic comparisons between renewable and non-renewable energy—comparisons where nothing matters but current utility

Instead of winning the space race, the country should aim to win the renewables race.

and discount rates. Think of it this way: Your family paid part of Texaco's business-expense write-offs when in the '40s it delivered oil to Hitler after his invasion of Europe. You paid for write-offs on the development of napalm. You paid extra for the Valdez cleanup when Exxon took the write-offs on its legal expenses. You pay every day for write-offs taken on national advertising campaigns for still more petroleum.

Any pretense George Bush or Jim Baker might have to a disinterested, patriotic view

of energy futures, indeed their entire pose of principled aversion to industrial policy, is rendered worse than ridiculous by their lifelong immersion in this sordid excuse for free competition. Meanwhile, in promising yet another orgy of write-offs to oil and natural gas interests in the "energy states," Bill Clinton is playing an old game of having his renewables cake and eating it too. Domestic natural gas is an improvement over Arabian oil, but tax giveaways to producers will hardly moderate demand for it, make it a renewable resource or encourage voters to press for a level energy playing field.

New priority? The principled thing would be discretely to eschew such stratagems and call for a renewable energy initiative. Instead of winning the space race, the country would aim to win the renewables race. The initiative would include a national building code with strong solar gain standards and convenient public-domain software for architects and builders. The Army Corps of Engineers and the Civilian Conservation Corps would work with localities to maximize the efficiency and solar autonomy of public buildings and Resolution Trust Corporation properties using zero-interest loans. National efficiency appraisal standards would help to perfect freedom of information in the real-estate markets, so that neither buyers nor tenants would be victimized by energy cost misrepresentations such as fraudulent claims about the superior efficiency of all-electric homes.

Meanwhile, displaced Cold War scientists could collaborate on vastly expanded materials research for efficient, clean and durable solar collectors, concentrators, batteries, fuel cells and small-scale windmills. The Department of Energy would handle the research in-house if that is what it takes to avoid the debacles of '70s solar programs, where oil companies were allowed first to gouge the government for sloppily installed experimental collectors, then to present their own gouging and sloppiness in a historical void as "proof" that solar energy is intrinsically too expensive to compete with hydrocarbons.

The Pentagon's old black Operation Sun-tan would be revived, not just for jets but for cars as well, but this time using Death Valley solar electrolysis and keeping in mind that if you want hydrogen aircraft to refuel at a given airport, it helps to have hydrogen available there. America would aim to be the first nation with an infrastructure for hydrogen vehicles.

The ultimate goal would be maximum renewable energy both collectively and individually, maximum energy independence for each American, and a new generation of "appropriate technology" for the wretched of the Earth. Kennedy's heroic rhetoric would fit in well here. "The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. ... Is not peace, in the final analysis, basically a matter of human rights—the right to live out our lives without fear of devastation—the right to breathe air as nature provided it—the right of future generations to a healthy existence? ... With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love."

Jonathan McVity owns the Solar System, a solar-energy business in Charlottesville, Va.



Family snapshots: The author grew up "in the warm, smothering embrace" of Caterpillar, Inc. But he and his father (with necktie, middle) have found themselves on different sides of the strike.

Striking home: How the Caterpillar dispute is challenging one family

As *In These Times* went to press, the fate of thousands of Caterpillar Inc. employees in Illinois was in limbo. United Auto Workers (UAW) leadership had agreed to temporarily end a five-month-old strike—but union members were being turned away at plant gates while Caterpillar management "assessed employment needs." The UAW's agreement to return to work on company terms followed Caterpillar's announcement that it would initiate the most ambitious attempt in U.S. history to permanently replace striking workers. (See *In These Times*, April 1 and April 15.)

The strike will undoubtedly have a long-lasting impact on the U.S. labor movement and the American economy. But the people it has affected most are those directly involved. In the following essay, Zack Nauth, a grass-roots organizer with close ties to the labor movement, looks at how the walkout came between him and his father, a Caterpillar manager.

By Zack Nauth

FOR MY FAMILY, THERE WAS NOTHING but the warm, smothering embrace of the Caterpillar Tractor Company for the past 36 years. To grow up in the secure arms of a Caterpillar salary and benefits is never having to go without.

But now, the strike of 13,000 United Auto Workers members at Caterpillar assembly plants throughout central Illinois has many families—including my own—on edge. My father is not a UAW member who wonders whether he'll ever see the inside of the shop again, but a low-level manager in Decatur. The long strike and Caterpillar's aggressive response have created friction between my father and me, while forcing family members to re-examine their upbringing, beliefs and convictions—and ultimately determine, as the old union song goes, "Which Side Are You On?"

A company family: By the time I was born in 1961, my father had already put in five years with the Peoria headquarters and we lived in a warm little house on Wilcox Street in a post-World War II subdivision. He had worked two summers in the Cat shop while going to college at

Cat insulated us from the ups and downs of life.

Bradley University. Had he not taken the job with Cat after graduation and become eligible for a "critical skills" exemption as an engineer for a company with government contracts, he would have been drafted in 1956. When I turned five, Cat began transferring its 85-ton truck design and production to Decatur, and we went with them.

To be honest, despite the overwhelming economic presence of Cat

in my family's life, the company itself left few footprints in my memory or in our photo album. There was a tour of the Decatur plant in elementary school or junior high, during which I was in awe at its size and scale. And there was one visit to the office during an "Open House" in which there seemed to be nothing but white men in white shirts and ties. Rows of drafting tables swept out across a wide, fluorescent-bathed room. My dad's desk, or work area, was in this open room, while other men sat behind glass-enclosed offices in the back.

I seem to remember coming home from elementary school one day after discussing dads and work to ask my father what he did. Funny it never came up before. "Design engineer," I was told, and that phrase has fallen into place beside all the other things you commit to memory, like your phone number, and it automatically issued forth anytime I was asked: What does your dad do?

I was usually just rubbing the sleep out of my eyes when my father left for work at 7 a.m. every morning. Sometimes he would rub my lips with his finger to wake me up, a habit that did not endear him to an adolescent boy. I would see him through half-opened eyes in the family room reading the paper, watching the morning news and eating a breakfast laid out on a tray by my mother. These things get passed on: I have never gotten in the groove of fixing my own food, but I devoured the newspaper, delivered the morning paper for several years and eventually became a newspaper reporter.

Insulated childhood: As I was reminded recently by another child of a Cat employee, one thing we took for granted was that our fathers were always available. No late hours or the weekend work that is so common to today's families. He was home like clockwork at 4:30 p.m. every day. When he got home, we would play catch or he would work in the yard. He coached Little League beginning with my first year of eligibility faithfully to the season when, at 14 years old, I was unable to hit the curveball.

The '60s, with their protest-filled social upheavals, seemed to have passed my family by relatively untouched. I remember almost nothing of that turbulent decade except moonshots and JFK's assassination. In recent years, when my mother and I talk politics, she has told me she regrets not having been more aware of what was going on, and isn't quite sure why she wasn't.

Caterpillar bought me my first car at age 15—a 1948 Willy's Jeepster that my dad and I towed home from a barn and rebuilt from the ground up. I didn't qualify for direct financial aid for college in 1979 because my father "made too much," but I did get \$7,500 in low-interest loans over five years. Cat paid the rest.

Cat insulated us from the ups and

downs of life. Then, Cat embodied the total absence of any fear or uncertainty.

As a Cat kid, you didn't know anything else existed but ranch houses, big yards, televisions, three square meals a day and a college future. Unemployment? Unpaid bills? Food stamps? Vietnam? In my narrow life experience, there was no need for things like public assistance or anti-discrimination laws.

I was apolitical when I entered the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana in general studies, and I joined the College Republicans in my sophomore year. I dropped out of the group, which seemed more interested in kegs than Congress, during the 1980 presidential campaign and volunteered for the quixotic independent run of Illinois native John Anderson. Both my parents had grown up in Midwestern Republican families, one from the cornfields of Iowa, the other from the German dairy farms of Wisconsin. Both families were members of Nixon's "Silent Majority." In the '50s, '60s and '70s, my parents voted for Eisenhower, Nixon, Goldwater, Nixon and Nixon.

But my slide to the left during college mirrored, and perhaps fed, theirs. They voted for Jimmy Carter in 1976, Anderson in 1980 and, under heavy lobbying from me, Jesse Jackson in the 1984 and 1988 primaries. My mother said it was Watergate, her liberal friends at the Presbyterian Church and her work for Planned Parenthood that nudged her into the Democratic column.

When I left school, Cat continued to play a role. It helped pay the bills while I did low- and no-budget freelance writing in New York and Washington, and it provided enough money to buy a car and rent an apartment down here in Louisiana when I took my first real job with the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* newspaper.

The radicalization of a reporter: The newspaper dispatched me to a semi-rural parish that was fast becoming a sub-suburban escape from New Orleans. I was assigned to report on the doings of rather eccentric public officials and their strange-talking, hospitable constituents. What I found was a heavy concentration of petrochemical plants along the Mississippi River, which split the parish in two. My first industrial-strength headaches awakened me to the dangers of the local oil refineries, chemical and fertilizer plants.

With the relative freedom of a bureau reporter, I looked further and found toxics dumped in the river, abandoned hazardous waste sites, horror stories about exploding oil refineries spraying oil on Christmas turkeys and a verdant bayou that reeked of Shell oil. These were but a few of a series of radicalizing experiences in the "Sportsmen's Paradise," a.k.a. Cancer Alley.

As I burrowed deeper into the

complex relationships between the parish's prominent families, elected officials and businesses large and small, local officials' petty corruption seemed to be less important than the economic power wielded by the corporations that local officials made little effort to harness for environmental cleanup, education or the eradication of poverty.

When the *Times-Picayune* sent me north to cover the state legislature in Baton Rouge, I found more of the same, only on a larger scale. After a year-and-a-half of pro-business reform Gov. Buddy Roemer, I quit my \$35,000-a-year newspaper job to join the environmental movement, which I fancied aiding. A few months later, I found my current job, which, ironically, is the outgrowth of a company effort to permanently replace 300 members of the Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers Local 4-620. In 1984, the world's second-largest chemical conglomerate, BASF, stopped negotiating a contract with the union and locked the plant gates on the members. And for the first time in history, the National Labor Relations Board approved the permanent replacement of workers.

A bitter corporate campaign forced the company to hire back the locked-out workers in 1989, but the damage was done. I had witnessed corporate power used to brutalize employees and their families when they wouldn't take what was given them. After the lock-out ended, the union continued a number of projects it had begun, including a study of the state's corporate tax exemptions. I became a researcher for the new Louisiana Fair Tax Project, which later became the Louisiana Coalition for Tax Justice,

a state-wide, multi-issue citizens advocacy group.

As part of my induction and training in this new world of community organizing, I traveled to Kentucky for a stay with the staff and members of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. There in the hills of eastern Kentucky I was introduced to strip-mining and a song about the "D-9 dozer." When I saw a picture of a D-9, it sported a familiar color: Caterpillar yellow. I guess that was the first time I realized my dad was working for a company that was doing more than building highways.

Family feud: After the Cat strike began late last year, I found out in a phone call back home that Cat had sent my father onto the shop floor to do the work of the strikers, building parts for the warehouse. The union maintains it takes two years to learn the skills to do the job. My dad said he mastered it in three months. "It's easy stuff now," he said. "It's hard work, but it's easy to put together." He said one employee is running a complex that six ran.

Computerized step-by-step instructions and automated "tape-control" make the work accessible to virtually anyone, he said. "All you do is stick it in the computer and go." I was aghast that he was helping Cat break the strike by taking the strikers' jobs. He did not mention feeling any regret for his decision, or perhaps did not feel he had any choice.

In one long conversation, we talked about the past: when he started, how he got the job, my office visit. For a long time, he acknowledged, the strong union contract helped everybody: "Whatever the union got, we basically got the same thing."

Then he recounted the recessionary cutbacks of the early '80s, when Cat cut white-collar cost-of-living increases, vacation days and eliminated raises a couple of years in a row. The weekly employees even considered forming a union, he said. At the same time, the union contract insulated the hourly employees from these wage freezes. "Their pay kept going up, ours didn't. The union was catching up." He pointed out that he now had a health insurance deductible while union members did not.

My dad mimicked the company's argument: Cat could not agree to the

I was aghast that my father was helping break the Caterpillar strike by taking the strikers' jobs.

Deere contract and still remain competitive. Deere doesn't make what Cat does and doesn't sell overseas. "Nobody is against what the union has done and has got for everybody," he said. "But there comes a point—you can't put the company out of business. That doesn't help anybody."

"Do you really believe that agreeing to the union's demands will put Cat out of business?" I asked.

No, but "I do think it will make Cat uncompetitive in some areas," he said.

I was incensed and disheartened when I heard on National Public Radio that Cat was planning to permanently replace the 13,000 striking

UAW members. I called home and left a message on the answering machine to that effect. A friend who works for Service Employees International Union Local 100 organizing low-income school employees and service workers caught the mood when she suggested we just drop everything and go to Illinois.

I soon concocted a brainstorm that had me funneling money directly from Cat to the UAW's Adopt-a-Striker fund via my savings, which I reasoned had been made possible by dad and Cat. With my contribution of \$250, I wrote a letter to my parents about why they should support the workers, which I also sent to local newspapers in central Illinois. "Which side are you on?" I asked my mom, half jokingly. Friends wondered whether the letter, which "outed" my father as a "scabbing" white-collar employee, would cause family dissension.

My mother thought so before and after she read the letter, but my dad surprised us both by calling one newspaper and asking them to print it. In my mom's words, my dad called them "in case they had any doubts about whether he wanted it published. It gives another side of the situation."

Talking to him several days later, I asked what he thought about Cat's intention to permanently replace strikers. He demurred: "It was a big decision. It's not something you make right away."

I asked again later. "They don't have any choice," he replied.

He told me about his breakfast club, which includes a Teamster truck driver who wanted to know how to apply for a job at Cat. The driver said he couldn't understand why the union wouldn't agree to

Cat's offer; he would take it in a second. I asked my father whether he thought that if other union members had taken this attitude in the past, he and others would be doing as well as they are now. If the union lost this, I asked, would not the effects ripple out to all Cat employees, prompting a reversal in wage and benefit packages and eventually affect people at other companies and in other professions, like Teamster drivers? "You're trying to convince yourself of something, but you're not convincing me," he said.

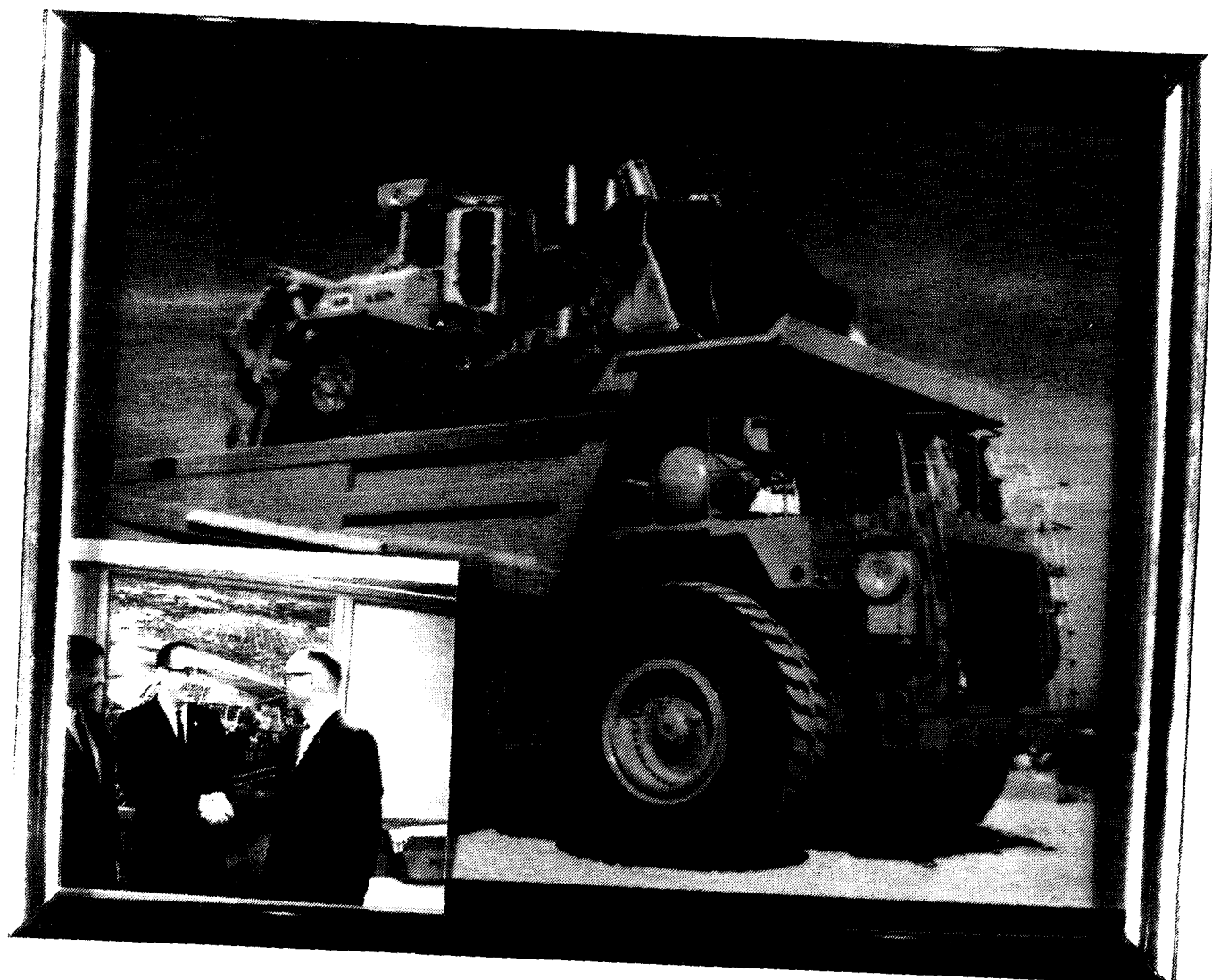
We could come no closer in this discussion. The line went silent and I asked to talk to mom. It was always easier to talk to mom. Of course, our family doesn't have half the potential for conflict that others have. My sister-in-law's father is a management-level employee, while her uncle is UAW. They feared holiday disruptions but steered clear, my mother said. She read about two sons who crossed their mother's picket line.

Debts: Taking on your father over his actions during his own company's strike sometimes feels like treachery. I feel I owe my dad and Cat a lot. But I recognize that my debt to them is just as surely a debt to the blue-collar workers on the shop floor who sweated and toiled and ached and built the machines that my dad designs and Cat sells. My debt is a debt to the members of United Auto Workers, whose courageous and bloody 1936-37 sit-down strike in Flint, Mich., first won recognition from General Motors, and whose members have lived and died and led the struggle for workplace fairness and dignity. It is easy to forget that crude business practices such as child labor and low-wage sweatshops were common 50 years ago. Without these brave souls, Cat, my dad, our family and I would have nothing.

Now, when the lives of so many families just like my own in Decatur, Peoria, Aurora and elsewhere have gone from security to fear and trembling in a few short months. I cannot forget. It is difficult to say nothing while families just like my own are put at the mercy of a powerful company that has decided, with little justification or logic, to simply attack those who make its machines. Little justification, I say, because no one disputes that the union has cooperated with Cat in changes that cost workers thousands of jobs over the last decade and saved millions of dollars for Cat. Those jobs are gone, and tomorrow, maybe their jobs will be gone too.

Many non-striking Cat employees such as my father undoubtedly believe that the UAW's demands put them at economic risk in the future. But if UAW is beaten, my father and other employees not involved in the strike won't have to worry about paying a health insurance deductible. They'll soon be footing the whole bill.

Zack Nauth, a frequent *In These Times* contributor, heads the Louisiana Coalition for Tax Justice.



By Pat Aufderheide

Well, why not?

They said it couldn't be done—24-hour-a-day commercials masquerading as programming. And then along came MTV, with commercials for albums alternating with commercials for shoes and bubble gum and chips. Now MTV may be about to top its own act, by packaging infomercials.

Infomercials are those half-hour- or hour-long sales jobs (diet shows, get-rich-quick shows, get-a-life shows) that look like a program but act like an advertisement. They were illegal until deregulated by the Federal Communications Commission in the mid-'80s. Now they're flourishing—so much so that the Federal Trade Commission has been raising eyebrows over fraud issues.

But MTV's betting on the infomercials. And no wonder, because so are Cher and other celebrities. (She's selling the hair-care products of her personal hairdresser.) The project is still at the talking stage, with some industry experts wondering if there are enough suckers in enough categories to make it economically viable. Some note that infomercials have an irritation factor as well: when an ABC station in Buffalo aired an infomercial (*Wealth Without Risk*) in prime-time, viewers went ballistic.

Sounds like...

If you just heard what sounds strangely like a commercial pitch on your public radio station, you may not be wrong. Public radio is taking a lick from public TV, as it tries to protect its turf in a tough advertising market. True, technically public radio doesn't take ads. But underwriting—payment for a "mention" on air—has gotten more and more necessary to the service, just at the time when everybody's advertising budget is shrinking.

The solution? Liberalize the underwriting requirements. (Sure, go ahead and give the phone number, sure, spell out in some detail exactly what you do.) And sell, sell, sell. Some college-affiliated public radio stations—understandably worried about university cutbacks—now work with a company that places local advertising for, among other things, music-industry corporations.

Your tax dollars at work

The White House's television studio has been busy and will get busier as the presidential campaign continues. President Bush is giving satellite interviews to local TV stations across the country. The expansive and accessible Mr. Bush comes to local TV thanks to the wonders of new technology and the federal budget, which paid for an overhaul of the White House studio and installation of satellite access. The president's campaign pays for the arrangement of the interviews, a fact that's not always mentioned when the station promotes the occasion. According to *Electronic Media* magazine, the losers in the story are national media, because the president's press conferences have been cut down proportionally.

And keep your eye on...

The Family Channel is Christian televangelist Pat Robertson's ever more popular cable programming service. It began as the Christian Broadcasting Network, with Christian soap operas and Robertson's own pulpit, *The 700 Club* (in the really old days—pre-1984, when Robertson launched a presidential bid—he would speak in tongues on the show) interspersed with golden oldies like *Bonanza* and *The Rifleman*. Gradually the golden oldies took over, as the service distanced its image from (but not its financial ties to) its Christian parent operation. Advertisers do like the upbeat domestic fantasyland (where did all the moms go on those *My Three Sons*-ish sitcoms and *Bonanza*-like western dramas?) of The Family Channel. They're not so wild about *The 700 Club*, though, but Robertson has resisted suggestions that he bump it into the wee hours. Nonetheless, Family Channel's profits funnel back into the televangelist's coffers.

Meanwhile, don't forget to watch Rev. Sun Myung Moon's media empire expand. Despite massive losses, his *Washington Times* continues to assert an alternative to the powerful *Washington Post*, and the Unification Church has also purchased the Nostalgia Channel. The channel operates out of the church's hugely over-equipped video production house, Atlantic Video, in Washington, D.C. Atlantic production facilities continue to attract Republican customers, which have included Sen. Bob Dole (R-KS) and the Bush-Quayle 1988 campaign. As a hard-hitting investigative article by Eric Bohler in *Inside Media* explains, money is no object for a church whose "father" has mandated "national organization of the video and electronic media business."

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Dangerous Memories: Invasion and Resistance Since 1492

American glasnost in *Dangerous Memories*

Dangerous Memories: Invasion and Resistance Since 1492

Chicago Religious Task Force
on Central America
272 pp., \$15.00

By Hans Koning

DANGEROUS MEMORIES: INVASION and Resistance Since 1492 has the format of a publication such as *Seeds of Change*, the coffee-table volume with which the Smithsonian Institution wants us to commemorate the

HISTORY

quintcentennial of the 1492 landfall of Columbus.

Seeds of Change, supposedly an above-it-all, "new" way of dealing with the conquest of America by the white race, is no such thing. It doesn't use the words "discovery" or "savages," but it still fails to distinguish the true face of five centuries of invasion, conquest and the deaths and subjugation of the losers. Its "they gave us corn; we gave them horses and Christianity" approach is only a minor concession to the need for a more truthful, less Eurocentric telling of our history.

Dangerous Memories does go the whole way. It documents American history from the viewpoint of the invisible men and women, the conquered and vanquished, thus intro-

ducing glasnost into the teaching of our past. It sets about its teaching task not with a continuous text but by breaking up its pages with different columns, in different type, each telling its own tale, with its own illustrations. On every page there is a column of historical background, a column of source material, a column of what the book calls "additional voices, quotes, poems and songs."

This makes a fascinating book to leaf through, but it also doubtlessly makes it less accessible, and it has been criticized for that. I, for one, think the extra effort is worthwhile. Being forced to do one's research on the spot, so to speak, gives an extra weight to the vast amount of information in *Dangerous Memories*.

This book about Columbus goes beyond the "they gave us corn; we gave them horses and Christianity" approach. It's a less Eurocentric telling.

I would imagine that an imaginative teacher can do wonders with a high-school class using this book.

Back to the future: And indeed,

even in this year 1992, a teacher has to be imaginative to dare break away from our standard lore of the blue-eyed weaver's son who alone realized the world wasn't flat, him and all the other false heroes we have made into a part of our national lore and myths—to such a degree that questioning them evokes great emotional feelings of indignation in many. A teacher who does this has to be imaginative. He or she does not need to be a radical. There is nothing radical about the facts of *Dangerous Memories*; they are borne out by a million documents in the Library of the Indies in Seville and by the painstaking research of such scholars as Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz (often quoted in this book), Russel Lawrence Barsh, James Youngblood Henderson and, going back some decades, Carl Sauer.

The radicalness lies in finally making the connection, in finally daring to be witness. This is dangerous, as I myself have found, in the sense that it may anger those of our fellow citizens who refuse to learn from the historical data and see instead a conspiracy, an effort to denigrate our Spanish, or Italian heritage or, indeed, America itself. But 500 years on, it would be very much more dangerous, if not suicidal, to continue closing our own eyes and our children's eyes to our past. We are doomed to repeat it unless we shed our delusions. A book such as *Dangerous Memories* does not threaten this country; it points toward the contrition and conciliation which alone can carry us safely into our future.

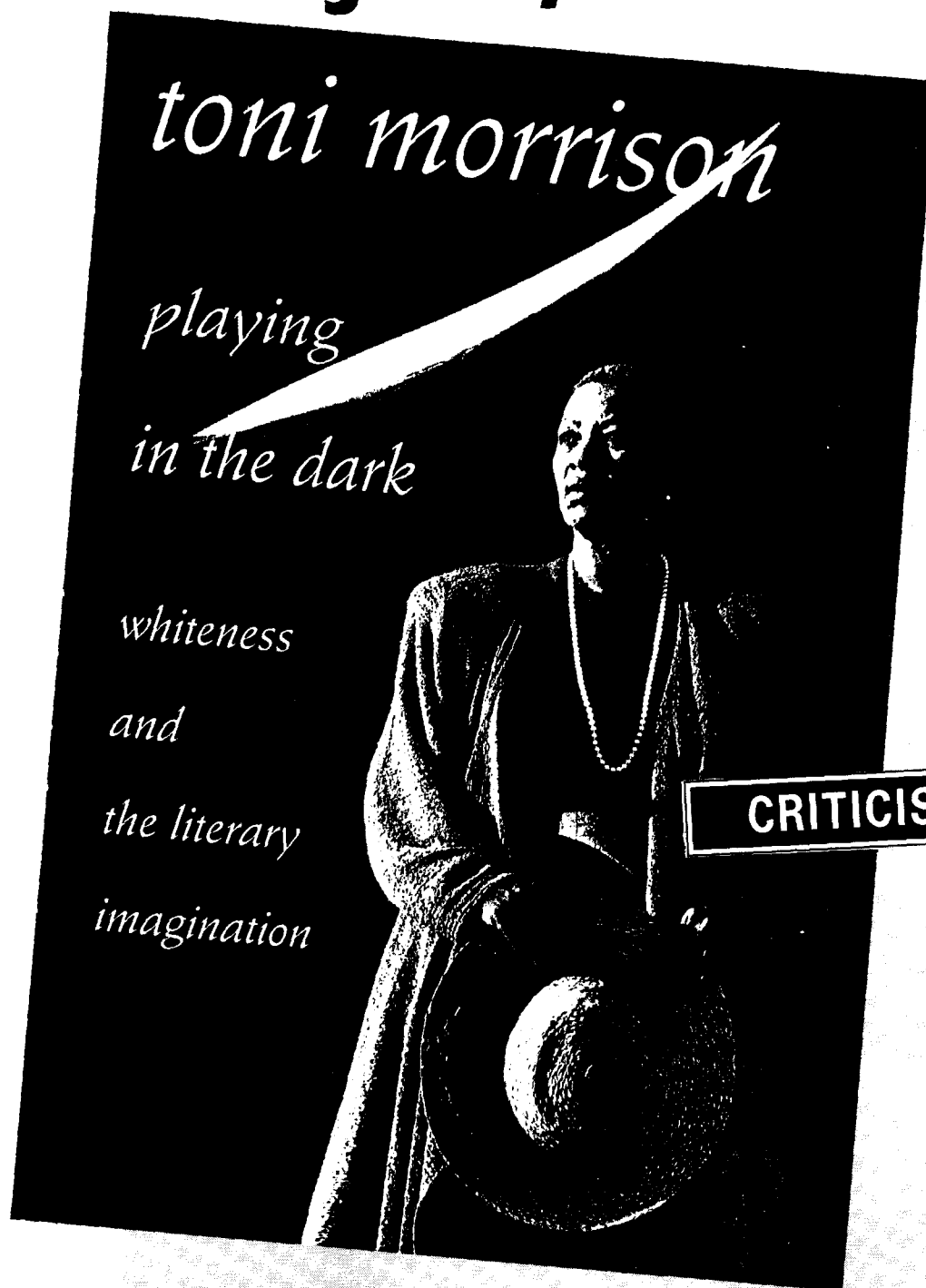
Hans Koning is a novelist and author of the biography, *Columbus: His Enterprise*.

**Playing in the Dark:
Whiteness and the Literary
Imagination**

By Toni Morrison
Harvard University Press
91 pp., \$14.95

By William E. Cain

Playing in the Dark: Morrison's illuminating study of literature



writers that have been regularly honored and taught. She could have similarly strengthened her case if she had considered the 1,000-page manuscript of Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden*, in which the racial themes are even more prominent and exotically strange than in the crudely condensed, bowdlerized version of it that Scribner's published in 1986 and that Morrison cites.

There's another problem with *Playing in the Dark*. It's misleading to suggest, as Morrison does, that

The author studies the manner in which white writers represent "blackness."

scholars and teachers persist in ignoring racism and race or else treat them cavalierly. The only concrete example she offers is a stupid remark about "the darky" from an essay on Poe published in 1936. She insists that "equally egregious representations of the phenomenon are still common." No doubt. But in 1936, very few literary historians, critics and teachers were working on African-American writers or on racial issues in Twain, Faulkner and other white writers. Now they are.

Morrison's generalizations thus describe what was being done in the '50s and '60s, not what is being done in the '90s. It's precisely because so much research and teaching now focus on race (as well as ethnicity, class and gender) that frightened conservatives such as Allan Bloom, William Bennett and Lynne Cheney have declared that the humanities have betrayed their mission of instilling "universal" values.

But these faults do not detract from the main virtue of *Playing in the Dark*. Morrison is vividly sketching a new way to read American literature and enabling us to see the hard racial truths that it contains. Her argument is daring, profound and painful. This book must be attended to.

William E. Cain teaches at Wellesley College.

TONI MORRISON, AUTHOR OF *BELOVED* and one of this nation's foremost novelists, has written a passionate book about the "Africanist" presence in American literature. She fastens on a crucial feature of books by white writers: How do they represent "blackness," and how does this, in turn, explain and intersect with their representations of American "whiteness"?

Morrison urges that a new critical discourse be devised to appraise the white literary imagination, a discourse that shifts attention "from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served."

Morrison emphasizes that she isn't simply referring to white writers' "attitudes" toward race. She is exploring something more subtle and complex—the manner in which white writers use black characters, as well as metaphors of blackness, to define racial differences, and, furthermore, to circulate myths of white superiority and masculinity, as well as cultural and political power.

Slavery as narrative: Race, Morrison states, governs the thinking of white Americans, yet literary critics and teachers not only marginalize or shun books by African-Americans but also manage "not to see meaning in the thunderous, theatrical presence of black surrogacy—an informing, stabilizing and disturbing element—in the literature they do study." As though it were fated to invisibility, blackness eludes them, even in the texts they have canonized and scrutinized with rapt intensity.

"Black slavery," says Morrison with piercing ironic force, "enriched the country's creative possibilities: for in the construction of blackness and enslavement could be found not only the not-free but also, with the dramatic polarity created by skin color, the projection of the not-me."

Her stunning point is that American literature and, indeed, America as a political body, came into existence because of the punishing realities of black slavery and oppression. This is the basis for white freedom and cultural achievement.

Morrison notes that none of the familiar classics of American literature—not even *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—was written for African-Americans. Yet many of these books fundamentally depend upon blackness for their structures and themes. Often, Morrison observes, it's a black character who in fact determines and propels the logic of a white author's book; this character, and all that he or she symbolizes, designates the "differences" against which the white characters are pitched.

There are, Morrison adds, polarized images of blackness and whiteness even in books in which blacks do not appear or barely figure. The traces of racial difference thus mark books by white writers even when black characters are absent from them.

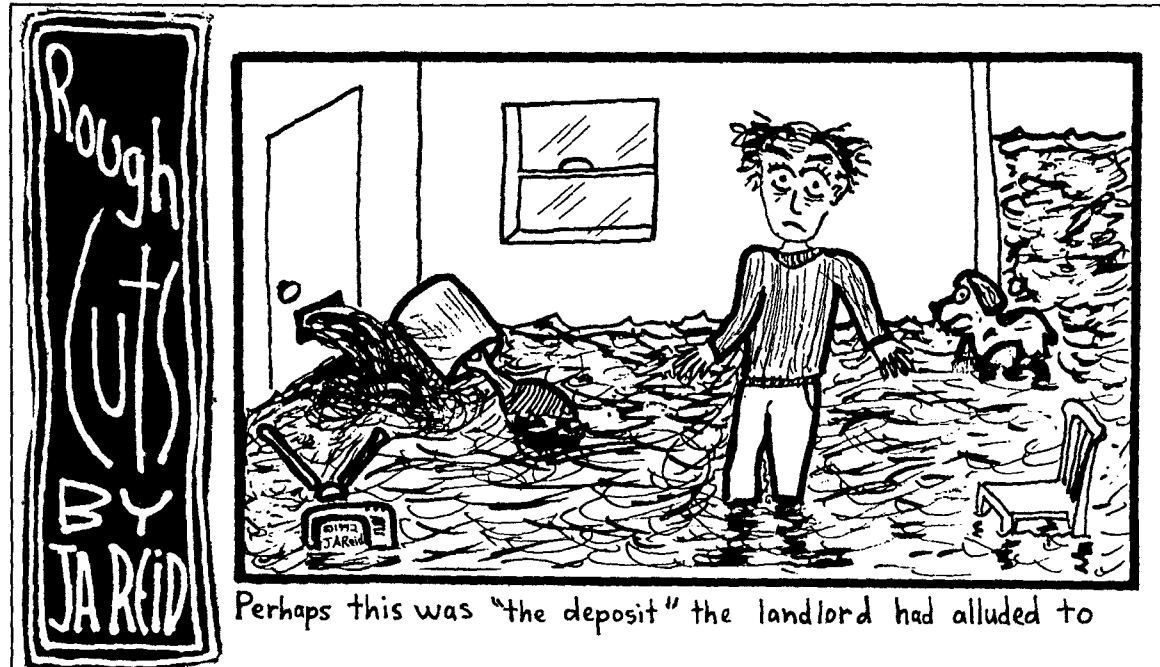
Poor choices: *Playing in the Dark* is essential reading for anyone interested in American literature—and in the ways in which racial thinking is everywhere embedded in cultural production. Morrison's book will lead to a remapping of literary terrain, and it will prompt others to undertake specific analyses of the various forms through which white authors have organized texts. It merits a place alongside such noteworthy reflections on American and African-American writing as Richard Wright's "How Bigger Was Born," which reviews the composition and meanings of *Native Son*, and James Baldwin's "Everybody's Protest Novel," which searingly focuses on Wright and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Morrison's own dealings with texts, though, are somewhat perplexing. She concentrates on Willa Cather's *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* and Ernest Hemingway's *To Have and to Have Not* and *The Garden of Eden*.

Why such odd choices? Why not explore, for example, the role of the "Negro pianist" in *My Antonia*—perhaps Cather's best novel—who appears at a key juncture "looking like some glistening African god of pleasure, full of strong, savage blood." Why not dwell upon the "wonderful

nigger" prizefighter whom Hemingway's Jake Barnes and Bill Gorton obsessively talk about in *The Sun Also Rises*?

On one level, it's part of Morrison's purpose to challenge traditional views and rankings, but her argument would have been more effective if she had shown how it operates in those books by major American



Earth Summit

Continued from page 11

to doing anything about the problems, at least they cannot pretend they do not exist. Khor said it is through UNCED that "the North has come back to having a dialogue with the South."

The NGO role was extraordinarily constructive. Unlike at other U.N. settings (disarmament meetings, for example), the NGO presence was real and measurable. Governments took the NGOs seriously, and some NGO proposals did find their way into Agenda 21. This has planted the seeds for increasing empowerment of non-governmental movements and structures. Maximo Kalaw of the Green Forum in the Philippines said NGOs "have evolved from aid recipients to facilitators of sustainable development. ... We are strong enough now not to be co-opted."

Computer experts set up shop at UNCED, offering services to NGOs in getting information on and from computer networks and teaching them about networking. A new service, NGONET, will help keep these people connected after Rio. Money raised, sometimes by just passing the hat, paid for computers and fax machines. As one longtime UNCED observer noted, with the death of communism, radical environmentalism is the only political force capable of being a counterweight to the free-market juggernaut.

Results are already visible. Within a week of the conclusion of the conference, France announced it was suspending one of its most ecologically destructive activities—nuclear testing. The fact that the ruling Socialist Party lost ground to two ecology parties in last month's regional elections cannot be

overlooked. George Bush is the obvious target now for political lobbying. When he said he may not attend the Rio Summit be-

cause he will be too busy running for re-election, it was practically an invitation to make the administration's benign neglect of the

environment a campaign issue.

Jim Wurst is a journalist specializing in United Nations issues.

C A L E N D A R

Use the Calendar to announce conferences, lectures, films, events, etc. The cost is **\$25.00 for one insertion, \$35.00 for two insertions** and **\$15.00 for each additional insert**, for copy of 50 words or less (additional words are 50¢ each). Payment must accompany your announcement, and should be sent to the attention of **ITT Calendar**.

NEW YORK

April 24-26

The Tenth Annual Socialist Scholars Conference—"The New World Order?" Speakers will include Maria Elena Alves, Stanley Aronowitz, Bogdan Denitch, Boris Kagarlitsky, L.A. Kaufman, Ernest Mandel, Jo-Ann Mort, Joseph Murphy, Major Owens, Frances Fox Piven, Daniel Singer, Cornel West, Ellen Willis and more. Pre-Registration: \$25, or \$15 student, low-income; at door: \$40, or \$20 student, low-income. Mail to: R.L. Norman, CUNY Democratic Socialists Club, Room 801, 33 West 42nd St., New York 10036. For information: (212) 560-0101.

May 2

"Toward a New U.S. Foreign Policy: Promoting Democracy and Social Justice," at the New School for Social Research, 65 Fifth Ave., New York City. 9:30 a.m. plenary: "Is There Hope for U.S. Foreign Policy?" with Edward Said, U.S. Rep. Major Owens, Holly Burkhalter, Joanne Landy, Christopher Hitchens. 2 p.m. plenary: "A New Economic Order? Free Trade, Free Markets, and Democracy" with Adolfo Aguilar, Harley Shaiken, Kristin Dawkins, Maude Barlow, plus workshops with speakers from East Europe, Algeria, Canada, Puerto Rico. Admission free. Public invited on first-come, first-served basis. To reserve place, call CPD at (212) 666-5924, or write POB 1640, Cathedral Sta., NYC 10025.

May 29-31

Vietnam Veterans Against the War 25th Anniversary. Celebrate the veterans' peace and justice movement, and the right of dissent in a democratic society.

Memorial service, rally, concert by Country Joe. Call/write: Mike Gold / Edward Damato, VVAW, POB 74, Brooklyn, NY 11215. Telephone: (718) 788-2009.

CHICAGO

May 1

34th ANNUAL DEBS-THOMAS-HARRINGTON DINNER honoring Sue Purrington, Executive Director of Chicago NOW, and Dr. Quentin Young, President of Physicians for a National Health Program. Featured speaker, Jose LaLuz, National Political Education Director, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union: "Beyond Free Trade: Building North American Labor Solidarity." Friday, May 1, at the Congress Hotel, 520 S. Michigan Ave. Cocktails: 6:00 p.m., Dinner: 7:00 p.m. Tickets \$35 by April 27th. A limited number of tickets available at the door for \$40. Contact Chicago DSA, 1608 N. Milwaukee, Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 973-6714.

WASHINGTON, DC

May 1

A May Day lecture by Paul Sweezy, co-editor, *Monthly Review*, on "Recession and Depression." Friday, May 1, 1992, 8:00 p.m. University of District of Columbia, 4200 Connecticut Ave., N.W. (Van Ness stop Red Line). Room 204, Science and Technology Bldg. Donations requested. Washington Friends of *Monthly Review*. (301) 495-9649.

SOUTHERN OHIO

May 1-3

HEARTWOOD 2nd ANNUAL FOREST COUNCIL in Southern Ohio. Be educated and involved. Learn how you can help save the last existing forests in the Central U.S. Slide shows, speakers, workshops, music and fun. Cabins, tent sites available at rustic Camp Ot'Okwa. For more information, call (812) 723-2430.

WISCONSIN DELLS

May 22-24

NINTH ANNUAL MIDWEST RADICAL SCHOLARS CONFERENCE. Come to the beautiful Wisconsin River for a weekend of workshops, discussions, canoeing, bonfires and hiking at Upham Woods. We hope to encourage dialogue about developing and maintaining working relationships between progressive academics and activists. Past workshops have covered topics such as U.S. labor history, feminist theory, the new international division of labor, arts activism, the prospects for third-party politics in the U.S., and the PC debate. Students are welcome. Volunteer to lead a workshop. Sliding scale fees cover all costs (2 nights, 6 meals, childcare): full-time employed \$70. Contact (by May 10th) the Havens Center, Sociology Department, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706, (608) 262-1420.

NATIONWIDE

April 23-May 2

CISPES TOUR - MARIA SERRANO

New York City: Thursday, April 23—"Building the Democratic Revolution in El Salvador," CISPES Tour of FMLN Leader Maria Serrano. 7:00 p.m., Public School #41, 116 W. 11th St. (west of 6th Ave.), Manhattan. Suggested donation \$5. For information, call (212) 645-5230.

Boston: Saturday, April 25—"Building the Democratic Revolution in El Salvador," CISPES Tour of FMLN Leader Maria Serrano. 5:30 p.m., African Meeting House, 46 Joy St., Beacon Hill, Boston. Donation \$10. For information, call (617) 524-1166.

Detroit: Sunday, April 26—"Building the Democratic Revolution in El Salvador," CISPES Tour of FMLN Leader Maria Serrano. 2:00 p.m., Gesu Church, 17204 Oak Drive, Detroit. Donation. For information, call (313) 259-1188.

Chicago: Tuesday, April 28—"Building the Democratic Revolution in El Salvador," CISPES Tour of FMLN Leader Maria Serrano. 7:30 p.m., DePaul University, Schmitt Academic Center, room 154, 2323 N. Seminary Ave., Chicago. Donation. For information, call (312) 227-2720.

Minneapolis: Wednesday, April 29—"Building the Democratic Revolution in El Salvador," CISPES Tour of FMLN Leader Maria Serrano. 7:00 p.m., Newman Center, 1701 University Ave. SE, Minneapolis. Donation. For information, call (612) 627-9840.

Seattle: Thursday, April 30—"Building the Democratic Revolution in El Salvador," CISPES Tour of FMLN Leader Maria Serrano. 8:00 p.m., University Baptist Church, 4554 12th NE (at NE 47th). Donation \$5. For information, call (206) 325-5494.

Bay Area: Friday, May 1—"Building the Democratic Revolution in El Salvador," CISPES Tour of FMLN Leader Maria Serrano. 7:00 p.m., UC-Berkeley Campus, Physical Science Laboratories Auditorium (circular red-brick building past Campanile Clock Tower), Berkeley. Donation. For information, call (415) 648-8222.

Los Angeles: Saturday, May 2—"Building the Democratic Revolution in El Salvador," CISPES Tour of FMLN Leader Maria Serrano. 7:00 p.m., Fairfax High School Auditorium, 7850 Melrose (Fairfax and Melrose), Los Angeles. Donation \$8 in advance, \$10 at door, \$5 low income. For information, call (213) 852-0721.

CISPES TOUR - CARMEN MORALES

Philadelphia: Wednesday, April 29—"CISPES Tour of Carmen Morales, Representing Women of El Salvador's FMLN. 7:00 p.m., University of Pennsylvania, Houston Hall, Smith-Peniman Room, 3417 Spruce St., Philadelphia. Donation. For information, call (215) 386-4711.

Eugene, OR: Thursday, April 30—"CISPES Tour of Carmen Morales, Representing Women of El Salvador's FMLN. 7:00 p.m., University of Oregon, Pacific Hall, room 123. Suggested donation \$2. For information, call (503) 485-8633.

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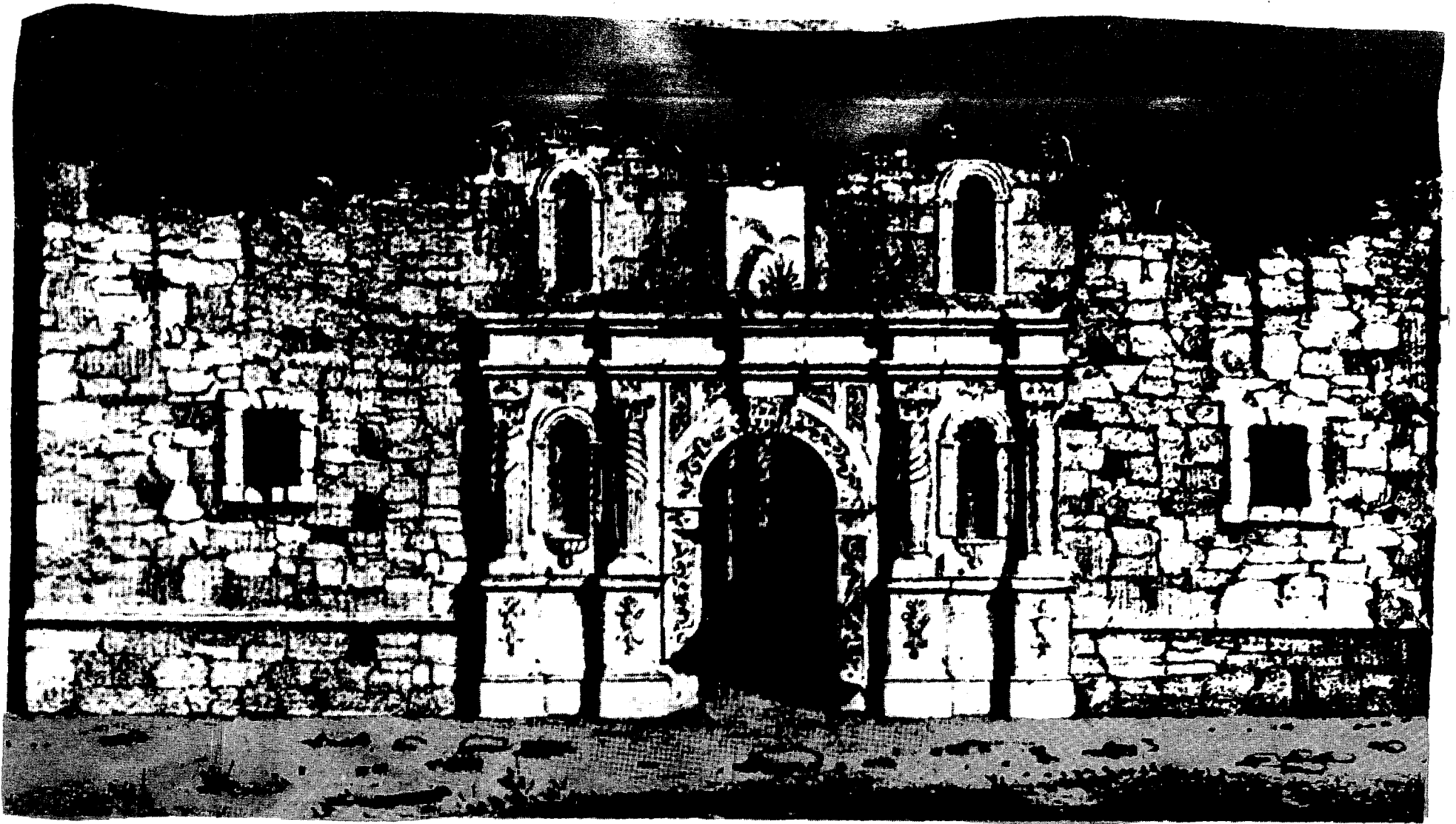
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Forget the Alamo!

It's a monumentally bad idea for politicians to pose in front of the Texas landmark.

By Mark Schneider

Like many American men in their mid-40s, I spent part of my childhood sporting a coonskin cap and collecting bubble-gum cards based on the Walt Disney movie *Davy Crockett*. I saw the movie twice and have vivid memories of the actor Fess Parker standing heroically alone at the Alamo, fighting against the faceless Mexican hordes after his ammunition ran out. In those innocent '50s, the world consisted of good guys (Americans, who, like Daffy Duck, never gave up), and bad guys (foreigners, like Mexicans or Japanese or Indians, who fought dirty). In this case, the bad guys won the battle, but the legend of the good guys lived on.

I was recently reminded of the Alamo story when presidential candidates Paul Tsongas and Pat Buchanan struck heroic poses in front of

that memorable structure. They both spoke of freedom, and, by their choice of that site for a photo-op, suggested to us, subliminally perhaps, the similarity between their quixotic campaigns and that of the underdog Texans in 1836. These ancestors were fighting for freedom, the contemporary politicians reminded us, and urged that we should recapture their spirit.

Not worthy of honor: Twenty years after my own coonskin cap days, I found myself earning a living by driving a municipal bus that passed the Alamo several times a day. I realized that the present-day tourist attraction embodied the central myth with which I had grown up. Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie and William Travis are as present in my subconscious as the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops might have been in the mind of an ancient Greek adult. Any resident of San Antonio, especially a bus driver, is

reminded of the story at every turn. Streets are named for the martyred heroes, and as many businesses are named "Alamo" there as are named "Puritan" in Boston.

But what was the story really about? When we look behind the myth, a tale that informs the current election may bid us to be cautious about those who celebrate the symbols of our past somewhat blindly. The story has a political and psychological dimension that tells us, alas, about who we still are.

Americans did not fight at the Alamo to defend human freedom. The new settlers came to farm, and the cash crop of choice was cotton, which was picked by Negro slaves. Mexico, however, had abolished slavery, and the Americans came into conflict with their hosts. These Americans were immigrants in a foreign country, Mexico, where many hoped to get rich using slave labor. After the Texan victory, the question of annexing the independent Lone Star Republic dominated American politics in the mid-1840s. The Northern Whigs were divided over adding so huge a slave country to the U.S.; the unsettling debate contributed to the tensions leading to the Civil War.

The Texans who fought at the Alamo had their own rather intriguing stories. Why did they refuse to surrender? And why did they even go to the Alamo in the first place—against the advice of Sam Houston and every Mexican in town, who warned them of what would and did happen?

In part, the defenders underestimated the

abilities of Mexicans to march hard and fight bravely. But also, the leaders were running away from their own personal problems. Travis was estranged from his wife in Alabama, who discovered him with another woman when she arrived in Texas seeking a divorce. He may or may not have murdered his wife's lover, an obscure story Travis had reason to hide. Bowie was an ex-slave trader, mourning his wife recently killed in a cholera epidemic. Crockett abandoned his family for no good reason after losing a Tennessee election. There really was something collectively suicidal about the whole venture, rather than something politically defensible or militarily rational.

History repeats: Seeing two presidential candidates speaking at the Alamo reminded me of how little white Americans seem to have learned 156 years later. In 1992, African-Americans have largely disappeared from this country's political conscience, just as the slaves had in Texas. We blame foreigners for our problems and speak of building walls to keep them and their products out. Finally, we still think of war as the first solution to our problems (especially in deserts), and arm ourselves against an enemy we cannot even name, refusing to look first to ourselves to unlock the reasons for our quiet desperation.

The Alamo myth only blinds us. Nonetheless, we have learned something from the Vietnam experience. We remember war better by our public monuments to the Americans who died in Vietnam. The Wall at the Vietnam memorial in Washington, D.C., helps us to honor the individuals we have lost, in a setting that uniformly seems to evoke our sorrow and pain. The memorial's statue of the three dazed American soldiers reflects the reality of war much better than the Alamo, or, say, the two Jima flag-planting monument. But we will not have recovered our vision until we see the Mexicans killed at the Alamo or the Vietnamese and Iraqis killed by American bombs. False images of coonskin caps and noble martyrdoms won't help us.

Mark Schneider works as a railroad clerk.